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VOLUME XXXIII.

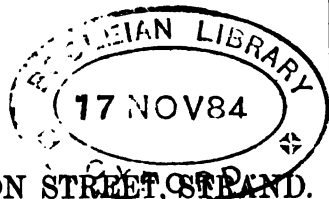
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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
ABOUT Some Old Masters . . .	341
Along Dockside . . .	57
America, Marriage in . . .	90
American Oil Wells . . .	138
Ancient Irish Dwellings . . .	103
Ancient Lake Dwellings . . .	103
Ancient Oil Wells . . .	138
Andrea del Sarto, the Painter . . .	344
André, Major . . .	303
Anecdotes of Doctors . . .	18
Annamites, The . . .	66
Arminius Vambery . . .	584
Aspley Hall, Frying Pancakes at . . .	153
BABINGTON Conspiracy . . .	210
Bachelor's Hall . . .	424, 448
Bacon-Fitch, Custom of the . . .	306
Balmerino, Lord . . .	205
Barbeacon . . .	248
Barrows and Tumuli near Buxton . . .	209
Basket-maker, The Poor . . .	378
Basques, The . . .	390
Benbow, Admiral . . .	440
Beas of Hardwick . . .	81
Between Two Stools. A Story . . .	238
Black Country, The . . .	249
Black Labour in Queensland . . .	520
Blorheath, Battle of . . .	308
Blyth, Nottinghamshire . . .	33
Boarding House Romance. A Story . . .	8
Bolsover . . .	210
Boscobel . . .	441
Bridgenorth, Siege of . . .	442
Brough, The Village of . . .	43
Brug, The Siege of . . .	444
Brusquet . . .	116
Buckingham, Execution of . . .	370, 438
Bunny, Nottinghamshire . . .	158
Buried Treasure at Uriconium . . .	396
Burlington House, Old Masters at . . .	341
Burton-on-Trent . . .	304
Business Occupations . . .	345
By Parcels Post . . .	108
Byron and Charlesworth Duel . . .	84
Byron's Family Traditions . . .	84
Byron's Tomb . . .	166
CAMBRIDGE, An Old Greek Comedy at . . .	221
Cannock Chase . . .	249
Carlyle, Recreations of . . .	257
Caux Castle . . .	441
Cavendish Family, The . . .	81, 210
Ceramic Art . . .	245
Charles the First, An Incident to . . .	78
Charles the First, Raising His Standard at Nottingham . . .	162
Charles the Second at Boscobel . . .	443
Chatsworth . . .	209
Cheap Clothes, Workers at . . .	422
Chesterfield Vault at Shelford . . .	154
Chicot the Fool . . .	233
Chinaman, The Poor in London . . .	492
China, The Taiping Rebellion . . .	252, 275
"Chinese Gordon" . . .	250, 275
Chronicles of English Counties: Derbyshire . . .	204
Nottinghamshire . . .	39, 78, 150
Shropshire . . .	365, 437, 508
Staffordshire . . .	245, 303
City Church, A . . .	227
Civil Service Employment . . .	414
Clay Pipes . . .	246
Clerks, Government . . .	414
Clipstone . . .	81
Cobra Snake, The . . .	470
Commerce, The Pursuit of . . .	345
Compulsory Thrift . . .	231
Constable, the Painter . . .	344
Corbets of Shropshire . . .	441
Cottage Mission, The . . .	299, 349, 375, 400, 419, 464, 492, 514

	PAGE
Couilly and St. Germain . . .	181
Counting-house, Meditations in a . . .	345
Court Fools . . .	233
Crannogs of Ireland . . .	103
Cripplegate Church . . .	228
Cripplegate. The Old Gate . . .	231
Crome, the Painter . . .	314
Cultivation of Fruit in France . . .	180
DALW Abbey . . .	207
Daniel de Foe . . .	230
Darwin, Erasmus . . .	206
Darwins, Home of the . . .	44
Dean Wharton's Daughter. A Story . . .	370, 395
De Foe, Daniel . . .	230
Delacres Abbey, Legend of . . .	308
Derby . . .	205
Derby China . . .	206
Derby, Prince Charles's Army in . . .	205
Derbyshire, Chronicles of . . .	205
Dibdin's Visit to Willey Hall . . .	425, 448
Dick Turpin's Ride . . .	42
Dinners for the Poor . . .	299
Divorce in America . . .	98
Dockside . . .	57
Doctors and their Patients . . .	18
Doctors, Anecdotes of . . .	18
Dovedale . . .	305
Drawn Game A. A Serial Story, by Basil . . .	1, 25, 49, 73, 97, 121, 145, 169, 193, 217, 241, 265, 289, 313, 337, 361, 385, 409, 433, 457, 481, 505, 529
Drewry House . . .	239
Dr. Johnson doing Penance . . .	306
Duke of Portland, The Late . . .	81
Dukeries District, The . . .	80
Dunmow Fitch of Bacon . . .	306
Dustman's Home . . .	446
EAST London, Travels in . . .	299, 349, 375, 400, 419, 444, 464, 492, 514
Eccentric Doctors . . .	18
English Counties, Chronicles of the . . .	39, 78, 150, 204, 245, 303, 305, 437, 508
Eos. A Story . . .	131
Explorations in Siam . . .	65
FALSTAFF, Celebrated Actors of . . .	30
Few More Fools . . .	233
Fiddler, Yakob the . . .	35
Fisheries Exhibition, Result of the . . .	330
Fish, Handbooks About . . .	325
Five Italian Dogs . . .	126
Fitch of Bacon Custom . . .	306
Flyaway Jack. A Story . . .	175
Fools, The Court . . .	233
Forest of Sherwood . . .	80
Foresters of Willey Hall . . .	425, 448
Fosseway. Nottinghamshire . . .	43
Foxhunting Squire . . .	424, 448
France. The Basques . . .	390
France. The Landes . . .	390
Frederick the Great, Anecdote of . . .	19
French Country Life . . .	180
French Fruit Garden . . .	180
French, The, and Tonquin . . .	64
Frisolous Complaints . . .	18
Frogs of India . . .	438
Fruit Farming . . .	180
Fruit Garden, A French . . .	150
GEORGIE: An Artist's Love . . .	353, 379, 404, 429
Gerald. A Serial Story, by Eleanor C. Price . . .	475, 499, 523, 542
Germany. Compulsory Thrift . . .	231
Ghostly Legends of the Synagogue . . .	198
Giorgione, the Painter . . .	345
Girtton, A Tradition of . . .	44
Gordon in China . . .	250, 275
Gotham, The Wise Men of . . .	154

	PAGE
Government Office Work . . .	414
Greek Comedy, An Old . . .	221
Grub Street . . .	230
HADDON Hall . . .	209
Hals, the Painter . . .	343
Hardwick, Beas of . . .	81
Hathersage . . .	210
Headless Horseman Tradition . . .	306
Holme, Nottinghamshire . . .	41
Hotapur, The Rebellion of . . .	309
Howitt, Mary . . .	306
Hutchinson, Colonel . . .	154
ICHNEUMON-FLY, The . . .	491
Imports and Exports . . .	62
In a Government Office . . .	414
India, Leaving London for . . .	60
India, Poisonous Reptiles of . . .	469, 486
Isthmus of Panama . . .	210
Italian Dogs, Five Curious . . .	126
Izaak Walton . . .	304
JAMAICA, Reminiscences of . . .	270, 294, 316
Japanese Fish . . .	321
Jenifer. A Serial Story, by Mrs. Pender-Cudlip . . .	21, 45, 69, 93, 117, 141, 165, 187, 213
Jews. Legends of the Synagogue . . .	193
John Dolby's Gold Secret. A Story . . .	452
John Milton's Grave . . .	227
Johnson, Dr., Birthplace of . . .	250
Johnson, Dr., Doing Penance . . .	306
KAFFIR Toad. A Story . . .	14
King Edward and Queen Eleanor . . .	44
King Edward and the Welsh . . .	368
King Henry the Fourth . . .	30, 53
LAKE Dwellings . . .	103
Lamb, Charles, Recreations of . . .	258
Lambert Sinner . . .	45
Landes of To-day . . .	390
Landlord. "Mr. Out-You-Go" . . .	89
Landlords and Tenants . . .	89
L'Angely, the Court Fool . . .	235
Leek, History and Traditions of . . .	30
Legends of the Synagogue . . .	193
"Leprous King," The . . .	66
Lichfield Cathedral . . .	303
Lichfield, Siege of . . .	249
Literary Men, Recreations of . . .	255
Little John, The Grave of . . .	210
"Little Sisters of the Poor" . . .	156
Llewellyn, Prince of Wales . . .	368
Lombe, John, the Inventor . . .	206
London Clearings . . .	226
London Wall . . .	229
Lord Byron and his Mother . . .	79, 84
Lord Lovel . . .	45
Lowe, The Rev. Robert . . .	154
MACCLESFIELD, Lord Chief Justice . . .	307
Magnus, Thomas . . .	41
Manners . . .	540
Manx Yarn, A . . .	175
Margaret of Valois . . .	438
Marriage in America . . .	90
Marriage of the Oceans . . .	210
Match-Box Making . . .	353
Matlock . . .	207
Medical Men, Anecdotes of . . .	19
Meditations in a Counting-house . . .	345
Mercantile Masher, The . . .	347
Milton's Grave . . .	227
Mines, Ancient Laws Concerning . . .	85
"Mr. Out-You-Go" . . .	208
Monsters of the Sea . . .	325
Moorthfields . . .	231
Mortimer Roger, Execution of . . .	151

	PAGE		PAGE		PAGE
Mouhot, the Explorer . . .	63	Richard the Third, The Days of	438	Switzerland, Lake Dwellings of	103
Mytton, Colonel . . .	439	Robin Hood and Sherwood Forest . . .	80	Synagogue, Legends of the . . .	198
NAN Scott's Chamber	42	Robin Y Ree. A Story . . .	325	TALBOTS, Family of . . .	83
Newark Castle . . .	41	Roger Mortimer, Capture of . . .	151	Tamworth Castle and the Mar- mions . . .	04
Newark-upon-Trent . . .	41	Roman Potteries . . .	245	Tettenhall . . .	248
Newstead Abbey . . .	83	Romney, Pictures by . . .	342	Theatrical Papers : . . .	
Nottingham Castle . . .	160	Rubens, Pictures by . . .	342	King Henry the Fourth . . .	30, 53
Nottingham Market and Manu- facture . . .	152	Rufford Abbey . . .	80	Thoney the Fool . . .	232
Nottinghamshire, Chronicles of 39, 78, 150		Russian Baltic. Story of Yakob	78	Thriff Made Compulsory . . .	231
OCTOPUS, The . . .	325	St. Chad's Well . . .	249	Tobacco Pipes . . .	246
Oil Wells, The Ancient . . .	138	St. Germain . . .	184	Tobacco, The Ethics of . . .	497
Old Greek Comedy Revived . . .	221	St. Giles's, Cripplegate . . .	226	Trade, Engaged in . . .	346
Old Masters at Burlington House . . .	341	Scientific Experiment, A. A. A. . .	159	Travels in the East . . .	299, 349, 375, 400, 419, 444, 464, 492, 514
One Dinner a Week . . .	290	Scorplings . . .	487	Trent, Nottingham, Fishing in the . . .	156
Oswestry . . .	441	Scotch Crannogs . . .	103	Tricycle Exercise . . .	268
Our French Fruit-Garden . . .	180	Scotch, Early Dwellings of the . . .	106	Troilope, Anthony, Recreations of . . .	250
"Out-You-Go" . . .	85	Sea Monsters Unmasked . . .	325	UNFINISHED Task. A Story . . .	300, 332
Owen Glendwr . . .	369	Shelford. The Chesterfield Vault Story . . .	154	United States, Marriage in the . . .	90
Owthorpe, Colonel Hutchinson at . . .	154	Sherwood Forest . . .	80	Uriconium, City of . . .	366
PANAMA Canal, The . . .	210	Shipa Leaving the Docks . . .	60	Uttoteter . . .	306
Pancakes. Custom at Aspley Hall . . .	153	Shirt-maker, The Poor . . .	445	VAMBERY . . .	594
Parcels Post Department . . .	109	Shrewsbury, Abbey of . . .	437	Van Dyck, Pictures by . . .	348
Parkyns, Sir Thomas . . .	153	Shrewsbury School . . .	440	Vernon, Sir George . . .	209
Paxton at Chatsworth . . .	209	Shrewsbury, Siege of, in the Civil Wars . . .	440	Vineyards, The French . . .	182
Peak, District of the . . .	210	Shrewsbury, The Battle of . . .	369	WATLING Street . . .	365
Peak, Peverels of the . . .	208	Shropshire, Chronicles of . . .	365, 437	Wedgwood Family . . .	247
Petroleum . . .	138	Siam. Mouhot's Explorations . . .	65	Welbeck Abbey . . .	81
Phelps, Mr., as Falstaff . . .	85, 57	Sibilot the Fool . . .	232	Welsh Border Towns and Castles . . .	441
Plays : . . .		Sisterhood of "Little Sisters" . . .	156	Whittington, Village of . . .	210
King Henry the Fourth . . .	30, 53	Smoking Tobacco . . .	497	Wightman Burnt for Heresy . . .	250
Poisonous Reptiles and Insects of India . . .	469, 486	Snakes of India . . .	469, 486	Willey Hall, The Foresters of . . .	424, 448
Poor in East London . . .	299, 349, 375, 400, 419, 444, 464, 492, 514	Sneyd, Miss . . .	303	Willoughby, The Fosseway at . . .	153
Portland, The Late Duke of . . .	81	Some London Clearings . . .	226	Wilson, Richard, the Painter . . .	343
Portland Vase, The . . .	247	Southwell Minster Church . . .	73	Wingfield Manor House . . .	210
Port of London, The . . .	57	Spiders in India . . .	490	Witch, Story of a . . .	307
Post Office, Parcels Post . . .	108	Squire of Willey Hall . . .	424, 448	Wollaton, Nottinghamshire . . .	153
Potteries of Staffordshire . . .	245	Stafford . . .	304	Wolverhampton . . .	248
QUEEN Eleanor. Places where Crosses were raised to Her Memory . . .	44	Staffordshire, Chronicles of . . .	245, 303	Wolves of Sherwood Forest . . .	80
Queensland, Black Labour in . . .	520	Staffordshire Potteries . . .	245	Workshop Manor . . .	83
RABELAIS and Brusquet . . .	114	Stock Exchange Speculations . . .	347	Wrekin Country, About the . . .	365
Ranulph the "Good" . . .	305, 308	Stocking Frame, Invention of the . . .	152	Wrestler. Sir T. Parkyns . . .	153
Ratcliff Highway . . .	62	Stoke, Battle of . . .	45	YAKOB the Fiddler . . .	35
Reclaimed by Right. A Story . . .	235, 250	Stories : . . .		AUTUMN Message . . .	84
Recreations of Men of Letters . . .	255	Between Two Stools . . .	283	By the Fire . . .	130
Recreation, The Question of . . .	255	Boarding House Romance . . .	8	Drawn Blank . . .	57
Reminiscences of Jamaica . . .	270, 294, 316	Dean Wharton's Daughter . . .	370, 395	Forbidden . . .	204
Reptiles of India . . .	469, 496	Eos . . .	131	If ! . . .	514
Revolution House at Whitting- ton . . .	210	Flyaway Jack . . .	175	Laurestinus . . .	180
Reynolds, Sir Joshua, Works of . . .	841	George : An Artist's Love 353, 379, 404, 429		Mirage . . .	345
		John Dolby's Gold Secret . . .	452	Patience . . .	469
		Kaffir Toad . . .	14	Perfect Day . . .	395
		Reclaimed by Right . . .	235, 250	Secret . . .	275
		Robin Y Ree . . .	325	Sir William Douglas . . .	443
		Scientific Experiment . . .	159	Willing . . .	14
		Unfinished Task . . .	309, 332	Wind Voices . . .	156
		Striking Oil . . .	138	Yearning . . .	325
		Strutt, Jedediah, the Inventor . . .	206		
		Subterranean Palace at Welbeck . . .	81		
		Swarkestone Bridge . . .	204		

THE EXTRA CHRISTMAS NUMBER FOR 1883

WILL BE FOUND AT THE END OF THE VOLUME.

CONTENTS OF THE CHRISTMAS NUMBER.

	PAGE		PAGE
A GLORIOUS FORTUNE, by Walter Besant . . .	1	MISS JONES . . .	57
WHY THEY KEPT HOLYDAY . . .	56	WHAT WAS HE? . . .	64

of the head, he addressed him with facetious deference :

"I beg yere honour's parding, Master Snobby, but I wished fur to ax you on your oath, sir, is them the clothes you was robbed of?"

The boy blinked sleepily.

"I thought so," looking again up and down the road. "Oh, the young varmint! to take the very clothes from his honour's back. Off with 'em this moment. Boots first," with a sudden change to savageness, which set Archie unlacing his boots with trembling fingers.

Meanwhile the tramp kept a sharp look-out on the road.

"Coat and vescott. Come, sharp's the word."

As Archie was taking off his coat and waistcoat the tramp caught a glimpse of the blood-stains on his shirt. He turned the child round, and after a moment's examination, cried out with extorted admiration :

"The cat! Well, I never! you're a young 'un."

Moved in part by deference to these early earned marks of distinction, and in part by sympathy with a victim of their common foe—the law, he turned to his boy who was grinning at the spectacle of Archie's scared face, and bid him, with another cuff on the ear, "give the kid his coat." The coat was not much of a gift. It was filthy, in rags, and a world too wide for Archie, but perhaps it was better than nothing, and it was at least a disguise.

"It'll hide them trade-marks," he said, handing Archie the bundle of rags. "'Tisn't every policeman would be as kind as me. When they see them brands on such cattle as you, they take 'em back to where they strayed from, they does. Keep clear of 'em, do ye hear? Keep clear of the police, or they'll tramp you back to where you've run from, and get you another dozen."

Archie took this not altogether disinterested advice very much to heart.

"There, cut."

"Please——"

"What!" like the snap of a savage dog.

"Oh, please, may I have the letters?" in a faltering but imploring tone.

The tramp sprang up so suddenly, and with such a tremendous oath, that Archie shot off like an arrow from a bow, while the tramp looked after him, muttering exclamatory curses, which was the nearest approach to a laugh he allowed himself.

Having then looked critically at the boots, waistcoat, and jacket, he rolled them together in a bundle, gave an admonitory kick to the woman, who was staring still straight before her with a glassy-eyed despair, and set forth, followed by her and the children, on the road by which Archie had come. When he had gone two miles he met no less a person than Bildad, who stopped him, to ask excitedly if he had seen a little boy about nine, with fair hair, grey trousers, blue eyes, black jacket and waistcoat, in his night-shirt, and without a cap?

The tramp might have taken reasonable objection to this description as at once incoherent and inconsistent, but he didn't. On the contrary, he was extraordinarily polite, and said sullenly, without the use of a single curse, that "he hadn't met no such a boy, nor no such a man neither, nor nothing, nor nobody, that morning but ill-luck," scowling at Bildad in an uncomfortably personal way.

"What has he been adoin' of, gaffer?"

"Run away from school."

"Runned away from schooil, has he? Bad—bad! There's the police, now," reflectively.

"We sent at once to the police, and they're on the look-out by now."

"Give 'em my compliments, and tell 'em to lay their noses along yon road till they run him in," jerking his thumb over his shoulder and winking facetiously at Bildad. "They can send the reward, post paid, to my address—Right 'Onable 'Ookey Walker, The Castle, York." Having thus convinced Bildad of the fruitlessness of all search in this direction, the tramp hurried on till he was well out of sight of Bildad, when he chucked his incriminating bundle over the nearest hedge, viciously, with a volley of oaths, and as far as he could fling it.

The bundle happened to fall, and in falling to get somewhat scattered, on the bank of the river just where in dry weather there was a practicable ford—a short-cut to Duxhaven—now, however, so swollen by recent rains that even a man attempting it would probably have been swept away. Here an hour later the clothes were found, and their discovery stopped all further search for the child. It left no doubt in the minds of the police and of the boys, and even of Kett, that Archie had either been drowned in an attempt to cross the ford, or had drowned himself.

Cochin's outspoken evidence as to the tormented life Kett and Skunk had led the lad for two months, and of his illness and feverishness a day or two before his flight, made many shake their heads over the affair as a certain case of suicide.

That he had been drowned, however, no one doubted but Mrs. John, who only doubted it. Nor was this almost universal certainty that he was drowned in the least shaken by the failure of all efforts to recover the body, as in the present flooded state of the river it must have been swept far, and may have been even carried out to sea six miles off.

In this way Archie's casual encounter with the tramp came to affect the whole course and current of his life. How, it is the purpose of this story to show.

When Archie ventured at last to look round, to his immense relief he found the tramp, so far from pursuing him, slouching off in the opposite direction. Taking heart of grace he sat upon a heap of broken stones to get his breath and his thoughts together. From his reckless race for life his feet were already cut, bruised, and bleeding, and he must therefore take to the fields.

Having rested a little he clambered over a wall, limped lamely across a stubble-field, thence over another wall into green and pleasant pastures, guarded, however, like the gardens of the Hesperides by a dragon in the shape of a bull. The bull was a sheepish brute enough, but seemed to Archie to look at him; first curiously, and then ferociously.

He fled, therefore, to the next wall and tumbled over it with such precipitation that he rolled down a high and steep railway-cutting at the other side.

He lay stunned and senseless at the bottom for how long he could not tell, but was at last roused by three piercing and horrible screams in his very ear, as they sounded. He opened his eyes and saw a gigantic express-engine sweeping towards him swiftly, and, as it seemed, without a sound.

He was in no danger, as he was just, though only just, clear of engine and train, but he thought that they would have been over him in another moment, and yet he could not move. He seemed paralysed with the same feelings which had stupefied him on the approach of Kett last night.

The engine pulled up within a yard of him.

"What the devil are you doing here?"

asked the stoker wrathfully, shaking Archie roughly.

"Easy, easy, mate," said the driver, who was looking round the "cab" of his engine. "He's hurt, I reckon."

The stoker lifted Archie to his feet, but he staggered, and would have fallen if he hadn't been held up.

"He's not fit to leave on the road," said the driver. "Here, give us hold, mate, we must take him with us."

The stoker lifted Archie, while the driver caught him by the coat, which, as being too wide and all rags, came off in his hand. Throwing it on to the tender he put his hands under Archie's arms, lifted him to the foot-plate, and set him sitting on a lump of coal.

For the first minute or two he was too busy with his engine to take any further notice of Archie. When, however, he had got her well into swing again, had eased the regulator, pulled his reversing-lever up a notch or two, and given a good look ahead, he turned round to glance down at Archie while wiping the oil off his hands with a bit of cotton waste.

A short time ago there was nothing in the world Archie so longed for as a ride on an express engine going fifty miles an hour, but there was not now any interest or excitement in the forlorn little face looking with an old-fashioned depth of sadness into the stormy fire, which swept with the noise and force of a whirlwind through the forest of boiler-tubes.

Archie's winning and woeful face touched the kind heart of the driver, and, when he had taken another good look ahead, he turned to stoop and shout into the child's ear. As he did so, he saw the blood-stains on his shirt, caused, he thought, by his fall on to the line.

"Much hurt, lad?"

"Not much, thank you," with a voice and manner so refined that the driver glanced first at the heap of rags on the tender, then at Archie's shirt, trousers, and braces, and drew his own conclusions, which, however, he could not express at the moment, as he had to whistle off a signal, and then give his engine "the stick" at a stiff gradient, and turn on the sand-tap.

Then he turned again to say:

"Yon coat noan thine?" nodding at the heap of rags.

The foot-plate of an engine is the best school in the world to learn terseness of speech in.

The driver put his ear to Archie's lips for the reply. Poor Archie, in his unnerved state, thought he was being again accused of theft; and such a theft!

"He gave it to me," earnestly.

"Who?"

But stayed not for the answer; for the engine being now on a level, and having to make up for the time lost in stopping for Archie, was going at such a blinding rate that the signals seemed to come close together as telegraph-posts.

When the driver had a moment to turn again towards Archie, he found him in a faint.

The shock of his fall, the reaction after delirious excitement, and the wild motion of the engine had, together, so upset him that he slipped off the lump of coal to lie in a heap on the foot-plate.

The driver threw some water in his face and put some to his lips, and had just brought him to, when both he and the stoker had to give all their attention to the engine, now due to stop.

When they drew up at Horseheaton, the driver lifted Archie out, put him on a seat, asked the guard to see if there was a doctor with the train who would examine the child, and promised to be back himself when he had run his engine into the shed—for the train was to be taken on by another engine.

The guard had hardly time enough to look after his passengers and parcels, without bothering about Archie, for the train was almost a minute late, and the child, therefore, was left alone till the ticket-collector came to worry him for his ticket, and at last, in despair, to bring the station-master to bear upon him.

Just then the driver returned to explain that he had picked the boy up off the road, and had taken him on, as he was not able to stand, and might have been run over by the next train.

"You'd better put him back where you got him from," said the station-master gruffly. "We can't do with him here."

Meantime, Archie had sunk into a kind of stupor, too sick, dazed, and dizzy to answer or even to understand what was said to him.

As they could not find out from him who he was or where he lived, the ticket-collector suggested that he should be taken to the infirmary, and if he could not be admitted there without a recommendation, to the workhouse.

It was not so long since a brother driver

had had his leg cut off in this infirmary, and died under the shock; henceforth, therefore, after the manner of poor folk and women, our driver regarded the infirmary as a slaughter-house. As for the workhouse, no, that wasn't the place for such a child as Archie. The child's wan, winning, innocent face at that moment pleaded eloquently to the kind heart of the driver, while his "dumbness was the very oratory of pity." He thought, as he looked at him, of his dead child, a little girl, three years in her grave, who would, if she had lived, have been about the age of this boy. He would have liked to have taken him home, and had him nursed, till, at least, he had so far recovered as to be able to say who and where his parents were. But there was his wife, who, if she wasn't the Government, was at least the Opposition, and, like a truly constitutional Opposition, felt in duty bound to find fault with everything originated by the Government, as on that account alone not for a moment to be listened to. She was a very strong Opposition, too, eloquent and caustic, with a sharp tongue belying a soft heart. Our driver, meditating these things, had a sudden inspiration on which he acted. He put Archie into a hand-barrow, wheeled him to his house, which was but a stone's-throw from the station, and went in, leaving him at the door.

"Wheer's ta been while nah?" asked Mrs. Schofield sharply.

This was a great compliment to her husband's punctuality, and indeed he was the "crack" of the "crack" drivers on the London Express Service.

"There was a bairn on t' road," said Ben shortly.

"Hast ta runned over him?" in some consternation.

"Aw didn't mell of him," said Ben—who talked English on his engine, but Yorkshire at home. "He was ligging on t' road. Aw doant think he wor runned over. Fell daan t' cutting, aw reckon. Fetch my drinkin', lass."

"Not deead?" exclaimed Mrs. Schofield, horrified at her husband's heartlessness.

"Not deead yet. Aw'm bahn to tak' him to t' infirmary when aw've had my drinkin'."

"Why, wherever is he nah?"

"He's at t' door hoile in t' barrow. Fetch my drinkin', wilt ta?"

Mrs. Schofield hurried to the door, and was moved, and was wroth.

"Fetch thee drinkin'! Isn't the seet of

that puir bairn drinkin' eneu for thee; let aloan having his deeth at thee door! Fetch thee drinkin'! Ha can ta fashion! Thinkin' of nōwt but thee gurt cawf's carcass, and t' bairn left to dee on t' causeay."

"He'll dee a seet sooiner in t' infirmery if they tak' him in; if not awm bahn to tak' him to t' bastille*."

"Why net tak'd him hooam†?"

"Nay, an' can mak'd nōwt on him. He knows nōwt."

All this time Archie's sweet, refined, and plaintive face was working its way to the soft heart of this childless mother.

"Here, tak' him in, wilt ta?" she said impulsively, "tha knows he's somebody's bairn, thou gurt lumpheead."

"I know he's nōcan ahrs," surlily.

"What's coomed to thee?" turning upon him sharply, for indeed Ben was overdoing his part.

"Aw've hed bother eneu wi' him already. He kep' t' train lat'. There'll be a minute dahn agen me." This was a sore point the wily Ben was working on. His missus was justifiably jealous of his engine, to which Ben gave almost as much time, and thought, and affection, as he gave to herself; and he knew that his mention of it as embittering him against the boy would not only fan the fire of her opposition, but endear the child the more to her.

"Tha sud hev runned ovver him, tha sud, only he'd happen hev mucked thee engine," with extreme bitterness. "T' puir bairn! thowt no more on nor a stane on t' road, an' his mother——"

Here Mrs. Schofield practically expressed her pathetic aposiopesis by hurrying from the house, taking Archie up in her strong arms, and bearing him in with an air which said as plainly as words that she'd have her own way, let Ben say what he liked.

"Nah!" she said, facing Ben defiantly with arms akimbo, after she had laid the child on a bed in the next room; "nah! tha wants thee drinkin', does ta? Tha'll get it when tha gets a doctor—thear!"

Ben, thus utterly defeated, beat a sullen retreat to the door, but cheered up a bit when he'd got out of sight of the house, and before he reached the station he had to put down the barrow to get his hands into his trousers-pocket in order to laugh. He never could laugh properly without first sinking his clenched fists into his trousers-pockets.

"They allus runs tender first," he chuckled, alluding to the contrariness of the sex. Leaving the barrow at the station he went for the doctor, and left a message for him to call on his return from his round.

He expected to be paid the balance of abuse due to him when he got back; but he wasn't. When Mrs. Schofield had undressed Archie—getting his shirt off by sponging his wounds with warm water—she saw that he had been brutally beaten, and was stirred to a deeper pity than she had felt at first; and this pity was quickened into a more than womanly tenderness when she had sat by him for a bit as he lay, sunk still in stupor, in bed. She thought, as Ben had thought, of the little girl she had lost three years before, who had lain where he lay now, and as he lay now, insensible. A breath of sad, yet sweet associations, like far-off plaintive music, came up from the past, "like the sweet south," warm and heavy with tears.

"Nay, lass, what's to do?"

"They've thrashed him, they have, while his back is all mashed up and then flang him on t' rails."

"Nay for sewer!"

"An', Ben, aw couldn't see him lig thear like that baat* thinkin' of ahr little lass, aw couldn't."

"Aw thowt on her mysen, Liz, when aw browt him," said Ben, completely thrown off his guard by his wife's emotion and his own.

"Tha did, didst ta?" said Liz, looking up sharply with a sudden certainty that she'd been tricked. It wasn't the first time she had detected Ben pig-driving, to speak ungallantly. "An' t' bastille an' t' infirmery an' that wor all nōwt?"

"Nay, lass, tha knows tha'rt a bit contrary nah and then, an' aw thowt aw'd reverse to get thee ovver t' deead point"—a metaphor from engine-driving.

"Tha sud hev knawn me better nor that, lad, an' aw sud hev knawn thee better nor to think tha thowt no more on t' bairn nor muck on t' road," said Liz, crying quietly, too much overcome to scold. "Shoo'd hev been abaat his age, Ben; nine year old t' fifth of next month. Eh, my puir Madge—my puir Madge!"

"He favours her a bit-abaat t' een. Dost ta think he's bahn hoam†, Liz?"

"I can mak' nōwt on him. He's been

* "Bastille"—i.e. workhouse.

† "Bahn hoam"—i.e. without.
† "Bahn hoam"—i.e. going to die.

fearful bad used and that wet as though he'd coomed aat t' river. It's some mak' of fever, aw reckon. Is t' doctor bahn to coom?"

"Shoo said shoo'd send him when he coomed in from his rahnd." "Shoo" being the doctor's housekeeper.

When the doctor came he confirmed Mrs. Schofield's suspicion of fever, only, like most second-rate doctors, he used terms so tremendous in describing it and its symptoms, that the poor woman had little hope of a mere child like Archie making head against such gigantic powers. He pronounced the child's illness to be "Pythogenetic fever, arising from a lesion, or morbid condition of the agminated glands of the small intestine." In truth, Archie was suffering from a low fever of the typhoid kind, which had been for some time coming on, and was only brought to an earlier head by the excitement, hardships, and exposure of the last few hours.

He had a good nurse. As Mrs. Schofield sat by his bed, old feelings seemed to come back with old associations, and she tended him day and night as devotedly as she had tended her own child three years before. It somehow seems that a sharp tongue in a woman is as commonly correlated with a warm heart, as long horns in a cow are correlated, according to Darwin, with a warm coat. Anyhow, they went together in Mrs. Schofield's case. She so devoted herself to the child, that even Ben began to grumble, and said she had run herself that low that there wasn't steam enough left to blow the whistle. In truth, she didn't scold much in these days. Now, the more she did for Archie the more she was drawn towards him, of course. It is human nature, not only to like our creatures, whether they be children, books, or protégés, but also to like them in proportion to what they cost us. "Those things are dearest to us that cost us most," says Montaigne.

Moreover, as we have said more than once, Archie was intrinsically loveable, and at a loveable age. Therefore, Mrs. Schofield began to fear his convalescence only less than she had feared his death, for his recovery, too, meant parting. Archie, as she and Ben knew from the first, was no beggar's brat. He was a gentleman, there was no mistake about that, and must be restored to his parents, when he could say who they were. But, when at last he could say who they were, both nurse and patient shirked the

subject. Archie shrank from the bare idea of being tossed back into Kett's clutches, with a horror that was at first even deeper than his longing to write to or hear from his mother—a horror almost maniacal in its intensity. Mrs. Schofield, on the other hand, when she had told him how her husband had picked him up on the line, gave the subject then and thenceforth a wide berth.

Their failure to identify Archie with the boy who was supposed to have been drowned in escaping from Gretstane College is accounted for by Ben's line running, not through Duxhaven, but through Sitwell, Otterford, and Kirkhallows, and by Ben's knowledge of geography being limited to his line. He picked the boy up between Sitwell and Horseheaton—a run of forty-eight miles—"twenty-three minutes from Horseheaton," as he told the doctor, which that gentleman, thinking, perhaps, more of the one-horse power of his own carriage than of Ben's eight-foot driving-wheel, translated into five or six miles. It is doubtful, indeed, if Ben himself had heard anything of the boy, though the case was in all the papers, for, if there wasn't an account of a railway accident in the papers, or, at least, of a new brake, there was nothing in them. Few men in England knew more about an engine and less about anything else than Ben Schofield.

Neither Ben nor his wife, therefore, had the least idea of who Archie was or where he lived, and Mrs. Schofield was quite content to remain ignorant. But Ben wasn't. He began to regard the child as something he had stolen, which was probably all the world to someone, and should, therefore, be given back. When Archie was convalescent, he'd say as he set off on a trip: "Think on, lass, to ax him where he comes thro';" and on his return he'd ask first thing, "Hast ta fun' aat whear he comes thro'?"

"Nay; he's noan so weel, mun, yet, he isn't. T' doctor says he mun hev' some strong support intil him."

"He wadn't turn on t' feed baat there wor pressure eneu in t' boiler to stand it."

The "feed" is the technical name for the water-supply of an engine, and Ben's metaphor precisely expressed the state of the case. However, as the mere idea of losing the child seemed to distress Liz so much, he didn't press the matter more for a day or two longer. Then he spoke again more urgently:

"It's noan reet, Liz. If it freats thee

soa to loise t' bairn, it mun freat them that belangs it a deal more, tha knaws. Aw'm capped* wi' thee, an aw'm capped wi' him, too, that he ne'er says nowt abaast 'em hissen."

"Happen there's noan belangs him."

"Nay, he's nat like nobbody's bairn."

"Tha mun ax him thysen."

"Nay, lass, tha munnot tak' on so. Aw sal miss t' lad mysen as weel as thee; but there's them that miss him more nor aither on us, an' wi' more raison. Reet's reet, tha knaws, and we mun du as we'd be done by. Think on, nah, tha spak' till him to-day."

It was a curious reversal of the normal and natural state of affairs that the husband should venture to lecture the wife, and peremptorily too; but Liz was low-spirited in these days. Archie himself, however, spared her the pain of broaching the subject. He was now out of danger, but weak still, not in body only but in mind. Even grown men are childish in their convalescence from typhoid fever, much more Archie. The child had grown very fond of his devoted nurse, whom he coolly called "Liz," as, indeed, it was the only name he heard her called by, for the doctor addressed her invariably and deferentially as "ma'am."

"Liz," he began on the day of Ben's last lecture. Liz, whose back was towards him, for she was bending over the fire stirring some beef-tea, answered without turning round:

"Ay, doy."

"I should like to write to my mother, Liz."

Liz dropped the spoon and faced round suddenly.

"Thee mother!"

"I must tell her," said Archie, on the brink of tears. He thought that his flight from school, which was in every newspaper in England a month ago, would be news to his mother—news that would give her pain and send him back to Kett's. It was only after a hard struggle that he made his mind up to write this fatal news, and a struggle in which it was not so much, of course, a sense of duty, as a longing to see his mother, that prevailed. Liz was sad and silent for a moment, smoothing back his hair from his forehead.

"For sewer tha sud write to thee mother, doy. Whear does shoo live?"

"Chirnside!" in the surprised tone of

a very little child, who expects everyone, and especially his seniors, to know what are the first facts of life to himself. Liz had no idea where Chirnside was, but supposed it must be near where Ben picked him up. Now that Archie was inevitably lost to her, she was free at least to gratify her curiosity.

"What do they call thee mother, doy?" Liz knew the child only as "Archie."

"Mrs. Pybus," said Archie, still surprised.

"Is shoo a wida?"

"She's my uncle's wife. He's a clergyman, you know."

This was rather confusing, but Liz gathered from it that the reverend gentleman was Archie's stepfather (who had outraged the law by a marriage with his deceased wife's sister), and she at once put down to his stepfatherly mercies Archie's mangled back.

"Has he been oonin on thee?" Archie, though Yorkshire, did not understand this expression "oonin"—i.e. treating shockingly.

He looked puzzled until Liz explained:

"Thrashing thee, aw mane, if aw may spak reet; wor it he cut thee back soa, doy?"

"He!" in amazement. "He's my uncle, Liz—"

"Who wor it then, Archie?" Archie's horror of Kett made him fear to confide even in Liz. He thought his enemy was but a few miles off, and might come to hear of his whereabouts any moment. He looked up helplessly at his kind nurse till his eyes filled and overflowed through weakness, and his terror of Kett, and his shame at withholding from Liz the confidence she so deserved. But the kindness of his nurse was greater even than her curiosity. "Thear, thear, doy, tha munnot think abaast it, tha munnot. Tha mun write to thee mother when tha's had thee beef teah."

Liz was more perplexed than ever, but she thought the child's tears too dear a price to pay for the secret. But Archie was not happy in his mind. If Liz had been his mother she could not have been kinder to him, and this distrust of her was a poor return.

"Liz," he said, suddenly sitting up in bed, and so giving emphasis to the confidence, "I ran away from school," with a look at once appealing, apologetic, and anxious.

He was immensely relieved to see her

* "Capped"—i.e. surprised.

look of surprise give place to one, not of disapproval, but of sympathy.

"Thro' schooil!"

"You—you won't send me back, Liz!" in a faltering voice.

"Send thee back! eh—doy, aw wish aw mud keep thee allus, aw du. Tha'll noan hev to goa back to yon place where they cooin thee soa. It's not like thee own mother 'll send thee thear agean. Shoo's gooid to thee, isn't shoo?"

"She's—she's——" Here Archie in his weakness broke into a passion of tears, and could say only between his sobs, "I—must—write to her."

"For sewer tha mun, doy. Eh, but shoo will be in a way abaast thee!"

For Liz understood Archie's tears in their true sense, and was pricked with remorse.

A BOARDING-HOUSE ROMANCE.

A STORY IN ELEVEN CHAPTERS. CHAPTER IX.

It was too late to take any further action in the matter that night, but immediately after breakfast next morning Mr. Trevelyan made a bold move.

The Von Rolandsecks were to leave the pension at two p.m.

At eleven a.m. he sent in his card to Gräfin Rolandseck with a few words on it in pencil, begging her to grant him a short interview on important business.

The maid returned with a message from the Gräfin to the effect that she was much pressed for time, but could receive Mr. Trevelyan for a few minutes if it was absolutely necessary.

Trevelyan, undeterred by the tone of the permission, hastened to act upon it.

Gräfin Rolandseck received him with a very slight inclination of the head, and an expression of unconcealed surprise that was intended to be sufficiently embarrassing.

It was quite thrown away upon the audacious American.

She motioned him to a chair, glancing at her watch as she did so.

Trevelyan bowed, seated himself, paused one moment with his eyes fixed upon her own, then said with the slight drawl which he unconsciously affected when under any strong emotion which he did not wish to betray:

"I come, madame, to propose formally for your daughter's hand. I feel that I am under a disadvantage as a foreigner in such a case, but I can refer you to my friend the American consul at B—for corroboration of my statements regarding

position, and so on. I belong to a tolerably old family, though I am an American; our branch was among the earliest colonists; and I am well-off, I may say rich, according to European ideas of wealth. I am a comparative stranger to you, and I expect no lady to promise her daughter's hand to a man about whose character she knows as little as you do about mine. Although there is nothing whatever in my past which I need conceal, I know the world and the necessity for caution in the most plausible-looking cases too well, not to be willing to submit to any reasonable period of probation that you may suggest, before asking you to give your consent to my marriage with your daughter. I await your answer with suspense, madame, and I entreat you to act as leniently as your duties of guardian to your daughter will allow."

Gräfin Rolandseck heard him to the end with a perfectly expressionless face. He could read nothing in it, not even the familiar pride.

"Permit me to thank you for the honour you do my daughter and myself by your proposal, to which, however, I can only give an unqualified refusal. You will not see my daughter again, Mr. Trevelyan, so I trust this sudden fancy may pass away sooner than you expect at this moment—this is my best wish for you."

Trevelyan turned perceptibly paler, but lost none of his self-command.

"May I beg you to favour me with your reasons for this decision, madame?"

"I regret that I cannot give them. To do so would only pave the way to useless argument on your part. Enough that I have reasons, and sufficiently strong ones. You will observe that my decision is only a repetition of my daughter's; both are unalterable."

"Pardon me, madame, for venturing to remind you that if the purport of your daughter's answer to me yesterday were the same, the manner was different. I drew my own conclusions from that manner—conclusions that I would speak of to no one living but yourself, her mother. There was that in your daughter's manner which seemed to say that I was not wholly indifferent to her, I even succeeded in drawing from her an admission that her objection was not to me personally. Under these circumstances you will forgive me if I decline to allow the subject to be dismissed in the summary manner you desire."

It was the Gräfin's turn to pale now.

Trevelyan's words brought a scene of last night vividly before her eyes.

She saw her daughter seated before a table, her face buried in her hands, her attitude one of utter grief. As she looked up, startled by her mother's entrance, for it was after midnight, she had disclosed a face so pale and tear-stained as to be scarcely recognisable for her own. Unnerved by her emotion and her lonely watch, she had thrown herself upon her mother's neck, and sobbed out the whole tale.

She told her that the sins of the father had been terribly visited upon the child that night. She told her that Trevelyan loved her, and that she loved him with her whole heart and soul. If they must part life would be intolerable to her from henceforth. She slid to the ground, still clinging to her mother, and begged her on her knees to have mercy upon her, and let her marry Trevelyan in spite of everything. She besought her to confess that she, Gabrielle, was free from blame, that she had not incurred the fearful punishment she had meant till now to bear.

Gräfin Rolandseck, with bleeding heart, had had to tell her that strong and blind as love might seem in its first ardour, a whisper of disgrace in connection with the adored object had power to destroy it in a moment. Was Gabrielle von Rolandseck the girl to pave the way to marriage with a humiliating confession which in itself would be throwing herself upon the generosity of the man she loved? Let her reflect that even in the event of his feeling bound in honour not to withdraw his offer, nay, even supposing that he still cared for her in spite of everything, a day would surely come when, the first glamour of love having passed away, her husband would come to dwell more and more upon that disgrace which he might have been able to forget lay upon his wife, but which he could never forget lay upon his children.

It was a line of argument to which Gabrielle's proud instincts made her peculiarly susceptible. A sharp silent conflict had ended in her renouncing her hopes and wishes.

As all this flashed before Gräfin Rolandseck's mental vision she blanched visibly. She looked at Trevelyan with sternness; she almost hated him for the suffering he had brought upon her darling.

"I repeat, Mr. Trevelyan, that I intend to settle this matter at once and for ever. My daughter and I refuse to consider your proposal; as a gentleman you will accept this answer as what it is—final. My

daughter told me, with regret, last evening that she feared she had not been sufficiently decided in the manner in which she declined your offer yesterday. You see you took her at such a disadvantage."

The blood rushed into Trevelyan's face at the sneer.

"Then, madame, your daughter shall have another and a fairer hearing. I ask you to allow me to see her now, here, in your presence."

The Gräfin smiled bitterly.

"That, sir, is impossible. My daughter left this village early this morning, and is a long way from here now. It was her wish, as well as my own, that you should not see her again."

Trevelyan rose excitedly.

"You have condescended to resort to stratagem, madame? Good. I shall follow your daughter at once. You will find the world too small to hide her from me, Gräfin Rolandseck. Your daughter is not indifferent to me, and nothing but indifference should come between us. I tell you plainly, but with all respect, that I shall make it my business from this moment to follow you wherever you may go, until you consent to give me a fair trial in this matter. From the day that you agree to appoint a term of probation, long or short, you will find me not only courteous, but devoted to you; and if the day ever comes on which your daughter gives me her hand, you will gain a son who will know how to fulfil his duty towards the mother of his wife. Till then, and not without real regret, I must regard myself as your opponent at a game of skill. This last time that you do me the honour to receive me as an acquaintance, may I take your hand in token of respect and goodwill? Thank you, Gräfin. Though you have hit me very hard this morning, I cannot forget that you are her mother."

His voice was not perfectly steady as he spoke the last words, and he left the room precipitately.

CHAPTER X.

It was an easy matter for Trevelyan to learn the name of the place for which Gräfin Gabrielle Rolandseck and maid had taken tickets that morning. The next train thither left at three p.m., and George Trevelyan was the first person to take his seat in it.

He withdrew into the farthest corner of the carriage, not wishing to thrust himself unpleasantly upon the old Gräfin, who, he

knew, was leaving by the same train. To his surprise, however, she did not arrive, and he almost began to give her credit for having wilfully misled him.

It was nine o'clock when he reached his destination. His first act was to purchase a Baedeker's Guide, and seek out all the best hotels. He then called a carriage and drove from one to the other, strolling into the coffee-room, ordering a cup of tea, and casually asking if two ladies had arrived by the early train from C—.

None of the answers he received would apply to Gräfin Gabrielle Rolandseck.

As he had no intention of making his presence known to her until the next day in any case, he gave up the quest at eleven, selecting a very central hotel for his night's lodging.

He was up betimes the next morning, and scoured the town—in vain. He met the two trains from C— in the course of the day, in the hope of seeing the Gräfin descend from one of them, also without result.

Nevertheless Mr. Trevelyan was not mistaken in supposing Gabrielle to be in the town, he was only mistaken in supposing her to be in any of the hotels. While he was searching high and low for her, she was safe behind the iron bars of the Convent of Notre Dame, pouring out her troubles to a little old lady in the dress of a nun. The lady was the superior of the convent, and Gabrielle's great-aunt.

The sister superior received guests for a few weeks' retreat occasionally, and in the present position of affairs the convent had seemed to offer the safest shelter.

Trevelyan, having wandered about the whole day without success, began to wonder whether the Gräfin had deferred her departure from C—, or had gone in an altogether opposite direction.

To settle the matter he telegraphed to his servant, asking if his old rooms were now vacant. In case they were still occupied the man was not to mention his question at the pension, but must telegraph at once either way.

He waited in the office till the reply came.

"Old rooms occupied; lady too ill to leave as arranged."

So that was the explanation. Then depend upon it Gabrielle would soon be on the spot, if indeed she were not there already.

It must be admitted with regret that Mr. Trevelyan did not exhibit any great humanity towards his foe at this crisis. He

forgot to speculate upon the nature or severity of the Gräfin's illness, or how far he himself might have been the cause of it. He contented himself with taking a seat in the midnight express on the return journey.

It was not quite seven o'clock the next morning when he walked into the pension dining-room, where Fräulein Sommerrock was superintending the arrangement of the breakfast-table.

His first question was about Gräfin Rolandseck's state, and whether her daughter was with her.

"No," was the answer. "Although the frau Gräfin has been so ill that she might have died, she would allow nobody but her aunt to be telegraphed for. We cannot understand it at all. The aunt is the superior of a convent somewhere, and could not leave herself, we suppose; any way, she has only sent two of the nuns to nurse the Gräfin, and mother and I believe that the Gräfin Gabrielle knows nothing at all about her mother's illness."

The news fell on Trevelyan like a thunder-bolt. It seemed to him that he incurred a heavy responsibility by preventing the girl's being summoned to her mother at such a moment, for he had no doubt that his presence in the house was the obstacle to her coming.

He went to his room perplexed enough. It soon became clear to him that if he were the obstacle, as a gentleman he had but one course open to him. He must leave the field clear. It was uncommonly disagreeable, but there was no other way out of the difficulty.

Now came the question, how to convey his decision to Gräfin Rolandseck? It was necessary that she should be informed of his intention to go away, and to remain away, otherwise she would not be likely to run the risk of allowing her daughter to come back. His plan was evidently to send a verbal message to the Gräfin through one of her attendants, as she would probably not be strong enough to read a written one. He asked Frau Sommerrock to procure him an interview with the sister as soon as possible.

The nun came down into the drawing-room immediately. Trevelyan looked at her narrowly. He wanted, if possible, to get some idea of her character before saying what he had to say.

He saw a tall, thin woman before him, a woman no longer young, whose sad eyes and lined brow told him that she had not been able to shut sorrow out of her convent

cell. Her eyes brightened slightly as she cast a penetrating glance at him, and there was decision as well as grace in her courteous bow.

"Keeness and goodness combined—a valuable mixture. I shall be able to talk sense to her," thought the cool-headed American.

"I owe you an apology for having requested the favour of this interview, madame, but I had an important reason for doing so." Trevelyan spoke in German. "I only learnt the grave nature of Gräfin Rolandseck's illness on my return here this morning. This illness, for certain reasons, is a source of special regret and anxiety to me. I am particularly uneasy on account of the absence of Gräfin Gabrielle Rolandseck; it is on this subject that I wish to speak to you. Certain circumstances may make the Frau Gräfin unwilling to summon her daughter to her side however ill she may be, but while I admit the weightiness of these reasons, it, nevertheless, seems to me an unadvisable, I might almost say a cruel preceeding, to keep the young Gräfin in ignorance of her mother's illness, or if she has been informed of it, it is equally inconsiderate to condemn her to a state of unbearable suspense by forbidding her to take her place by her mother's sick-bed; a place that is a daughter's sacred right at such a time."

"It is certainly a daughter's privilege to wait upon her mother in illness under ordinary circumstances, but there are cases in which the most affectionate daughters are called upon to renounce this privilege from higher considerations. This is such a case."

Trevelyan knitted his brow, and could not repress a slight movement of impatience.

"Pardon my saying, madame, that I imagine there must be a temptation in members of any religious order to demand from ordinary humanity sacrifices that only a life of devotion and self-denial has made possible for themselves. It seems to me that you do so in this case. Probably you do not know Gräfin Gabrielle Rolandseck. She is young, is endowed with warm and deep feelings, and idolises her mother. I believe she would be capable of any heroism to prolong her life or alleviate her sufferings, but I do not believe that she would be capable of the heroism that demanded absence from her mother's sick chamber, and the risk of absence from her mother's dying bed."

"I know Gräfin Gabrielle, sir, and I cannot agree with you."

"Then, madame, you may have seen her, but I question whether you know her. But be the young lady's duty in the matter what it may, I believe the obstacles that prevent her being summoned can be smoothed away if you will kindly deliver a message from me to the Frau Gräfin. I have reason to believe that my presence here is the chief difficulty in the way of Gräfin Gabrielle Rolandseck's return. I will therefore beg you to do me the favour to present my compliments to the Frau Gräfin, and to tell her that I shall hold myself in readiness to leave this neighbourhood whenever she may desire, and that I pledge my word not to return during her daughter's stay, be it long or short."

There was a pause. The sister spoke at last with some hesitation:

"I hope I am not doing wrong when I venture to say that I know enough of the circumstances to be able to appreciate your sentiments. I will give the message, and bring the answer as soon as possible."

"That would be troubling you too much. A line on a card is all that is necessary."

"To say a word takes less time than to write it. If you should happen to be in the garden about dinner-time—it is deserted then, and I take a few minutes' exercise there—I will give you your answer."

The interview left Trevelyan with an unaccountable sense of relief, almost of hope. He felt attracted by the sister; he gathered that she knew something about the real state of affairs, and he did not think she was inclined to be very hard upon him.

He was waiting in the garden long before dinner-time. The sister did not appear until the gong had sounded.

Both bowed.

"Shall we sit down?" asked the nun, with a glance at the bench that stood against the wall of the house, just under the window of Frau Sommerrock's room.

Trevelyan moved towards it without speaking.

"The Gräfin thanks you for your message—it touched her."

Trevelyan looked up in surprise. The little casement window overhead was softly opened, but so slightly as to be scarcely perceptible.

"She will not take advantage of it, however, as I thought. She sends you word that she is so much better as to look forward to joining her daughter very soon now; until she can do that she would rather deny herself her company than inconvenience Herr Trevelyan. She wished

me to say that you must not think her decision implied the slightest doubt of your word, she is sure you would keep that, but it is her wish that neither she nor her daughter should ever put you to inconvenience again, although you are good enough to look upon this as trifling."

Trevelyan's colour deepened. He bent towards the nun, and spoke impulsively. His voice was low, his emotion vibrated through it:

"Madame, you are vowed to a life of good works, of sympathy, and charity. I may surely venture to speak to you with more openness and sincerity than I should do to a woman of the world. I believe you would feel sorry for me if you knew all, as I see you know a little of this matter. Do not consider me impertinent if I beg you to let me confide my difficulties to you; all I ask in return is a word of sympathy, if you do not see your way to give me a word of advice."

He waited a moment. The sister's silence encouraged him to proceed.

"I am very unhappy. I love Gräfin Gabrielle Rolandseck devotedly, and she refuses my suit. I may tell you, madame, that she alleges no adequate reason for doing so, and I cannot but believe, loving her as I do, that I could have brought her to care for me in time, if her mother would have countenanced our engagement. The Frau Gräfin will not listen to it, however, and three days without seeing Gabrielle have sufficed to show me how desperate my case is. I am not the same man since this disappointment, and if I cannot overcome Gabrielle's objections I shall never be the same again. Life is not worth living without her, I must win her or I am ruined. The world thinks lightly of such matters and would laugh at the statement, but my words may have meaning for you. Madame, if the salvation of a soul, more or less, is a matter of any moment to you, I entreat you to open Gabrielle's eyes to what she is doing. Surely she cannot persevere in her present conduct!"

Frau Sommerrock's casement began to move curiously as if held by a hand that trembled violently, but how could Trevelyan and the nun, sitting with their backs to it, suspect that they were overheard?

"She must, she has no choice. You only see things as they appear, not as they are. One thing I may tell you for your comfort, you have escaped certain sorrow as well as uncertain happiness by her decision."

The nun spoke rapidly and in a low, agitated voice, as if the words escaped her in spite of her better judgment.

"Madame!"

"Your story has interested me. I know the family well, and I know the reason that made it impossible for Gabrielle to accept you though she lov—if she had loved you."

"And that reason? You will not stop short there? You would never leave me in this hideous suspense? Pray speak, you may trust me."

"I—I ought not."

"That reason is——"

"Since you will have it, that reason is a great stain upon her father's name. The Rolandsecks are a very old and a very proud family, but for all that the last count degraded himself to commit a crime—forgery—and he died, a common criminal, in a common prison. The only excuses that can be made for him are further blots on his character. He was weak-minded and a gambler. You know what you have escaped now. Do your blighted hopes look so terrible by the light of this revelation? Don't you rather congratulate yourself on having been saved from pledging your honour to Graf Rolandseck's daughter?"

Trevelyan drew a long breath. He had not a single word to say, the statement had stunned him.

Here was a reason indeed! Even in his present excited state he could not deny that for a moment. The name he bore was not a distinguished one, but it had been unsullied through many generations, and it dawned upon him in this moment how jealous he was of its honour.

A mad longing possessed him to win Gabrielle even in spite of this, but it was held in check by a chilling sense that he owed it to himself and to those of his name to look this wretched fact steadily in the face before pressing his suit farther. The sister's words had impressed him, a miserable conviction was stealing over him that even blighted hopes were not the worst evil that could befall man.

"Gabrielle acted kindly, not cruelly, you see," said the sister softly.

"Perhaps she did—Heaven only knows! But don't imagine that what you have told me lowers her one bit in my estimation, poor girl! The circumstance that you have confided to me is a very serious one, and we are all the slaves of circumstances, even when we believe that we have risen into another and a higher world through

love. This fact has flung me from heaven to earth rather roughly, but I love Gabrielle still, and shall love her always, however this miserable knowledge may affect my actions."

"That is no concern of mine, nor of hers either now. My end is accomplished, I have reconciled you to your fate by opening your eyes to the truth. We have no more to say to each other, you and I. Good-bye, and Heaven bless you!"

Trevelyan would have replied, but she turned and left him before he could do so. He was not very sorry; he hardly knew what he could have said.

Frau Sommerrock's window blew to softly; the hand that had held it open was withdrawn.

CHAPTER XI.

ALL that night Trevelyan was racked with tortures of doubt and indecision. He believed that he would have little difficulty in persuading the woman he loved to consent to become his wife if he chose to press his suit, but the question that troubled him was how far he would be acting wisely to press it, under the circumstances. Gabrielle was very dear to him, but honour was very dear to him, too, and whatever threatened to dim the lustre of that, it seemed to him, could not be really desirable, longed he for it never so wildly. Trevelyan was a true-born American; caution and keenness were part of his very nature, though that nature was capable of noble disinterestedness and enthusiasm on occasion. He brought all his sense to bear upon the difficult matter that he had to settle at once and for ever.

It ended in his gaining what he believed to be a most praiseworthy victory over himself. Before going down to breakfast, he looked round his room, and collected his things together one by one with a dismal determination to lose no time in leaving the place and its associations behind him for ever. He dared not trust himself here any longer. He told Frau Sommerrock his intention at breakfast, and received her loud lamentations with a calmness that wounded her considerably.

As he was going to his room later he was startled by a sound from Gräfin Rolandseck's sitting-room. What was it?

A hand being swept softly and lingeringly over the keys of a zither, two or three chords of an air he knew well. Then sudden silence.

Every vestige of colour forsook his face.

All the strength of his fine resolutions melted away. He was fascinated to the spot, he could not move.

In a single instant a dozen memories and considerations rushed into his mind. Her face came before him as he had seen it that first time in the carriage, with the strange sadness shadowing its beauty. Her character came before him in all the proud nobility that prompted her to sacrifice every chance of future happiness because of her father's sin. Her lonely, unprotected youth came before him, and—mingled with all, rising above all—her love for himself.

Had he been mad that he had dreamed of letting anything in the wide world keep him from her? Looked at by the light of her noble self, what were the obstacles that stood in his path but mean, selfish considerations. Did he not know that he possessed the priceless treasure of her love, and was she not very unhappy, very helpless? Was George Trevelyan the man to forsake the woman he loved in such an hour?

He did not wait to knock at the door, or to do anything else respectful and proper. He walked straight in, and was rewarded by seeing Gabrielle's own eyes fixed sadly on her silent zither.

As she looked up, a sudden wave of scarlet swept over her face, making even her forehead pink, and new life flashed into her wan eye.

"Gabrielle, Gabrielle, you are here, thank Heaven! I have come to tell you that all that is no excuse for breaking my heart. You are dearer to me than ever you were, now that I know all. Promise me that you will make my life blissful with your presence, and I will swear to charm all your own troubles away. They are things of the past already, my love. We will take your mother with us to my country, and you will learn to love it, as my people will love you. You will only be my wife there, Gabrielle; there will be no shadow on Mrs. Trevelyan's name!"

He had taken her in his arms.

The proud heart that had been frozen so long was melted at last, and hot tears were falling like rain upon his breast.

"I ought to send you away even now for your own sake, Mr. Trevelyan, but I cannot, I cannot. I was in Frau Sommerrock's room when you spoke to the sister in the garden, and heard all; it was I who told her to tell you. Are you surprised that I am here? I could not stay away

when my mother was so ill, but I did not mean to see you again. I persuaded my aunt to lend me a cloak, and a long thick veil of one of the nuns, to travel in, so the people here, who have never caught sight of me since, put me down for a sister from the convent. What I have suffered since I returned! I thought I had quite made up my mind to our separation before. It is very wicked and selfish of me to cling to you because I love you so, but I have been trying to face life without you, and it was terrible, terrible! You sacrifice very, very much in making me your wife, but my love shall make it all up to you. It shall, indeed!"

"WILLING."

THE wind wails sadly from the distant seas,
The wind sobs lowly through the leafless trees,
Their voice, the only sound that stirs the gloom,
That shadow-like hangs o'er the silent room;
And in my solitude I sit and muse,
How all would change for me, so I could choose
One hand to turn the lock, one voice to cheer,
One step to measure music for my ear!

Dear, the great chair stands empty by the hearth,
The blaze you love leaps up in flickle mirth.
How the dark curls would show against the red,
If 'gainst yon cushion leant the proud young head;

How the blue eyes would 'neath their lashes shine,

And the rare smile flash out to answer mine,
If the strong yearning could but prove its might,
And bring you to me for an hour to-night.

I have so much to ask, so much to say.
I tire of dreaming night and haunted day;
'Tis not so very much to ask of Fate.
I know her bonds are strong, her law is great;
I make no struggle 'gainst her stern decree.
I ask one hour, no more, for you and me;
The whole world narrows to one passionate wish.
A pool makes ocean for one little fish.

I push aside the curtain; in the skies,
Pale, 'mid the driving clouds the pale moon lies,
Steadfast, or shining lone in gleamy space,
Or when the blackness sweeps across her face;
So, amid hope, care, trouble, joy, or pain,
Unshaken monarch of my life you reign.
Does the deep longing make its power known?
The centred will call to you: "Come, mine own?"

A KAFFIR TOAD.

A STORY IN TWO CHAPTERS. CHAPTER II.

WISDEN lent his guest a mounted Hot-tentot, under whose direction he rode straight across the veldt to New Rush, with the purpose of examining Sinclair before visiting Pniel. The moon rose early, the horses were good, and by nine o'clock they brought him into camp. The first passer-by directed him to Skinner's tent, a fabric of three rooms, surrounded by canvas dependencies, stable, cookhouse, servants' quarters, store-room.

Bang was entertaining friends, as usual, though his blacks had but just begun to wash the driving cart in which he had returned from Annandale—for, travelling at leisure, he had stayed the night at Pniel. Sinclair, a big fat-faced half-breed, showed in the visitor. Half-a-dozen men, flushed with drink and excitement, sat round the table in a room lined with green baize, carpeted, handsomely furnished. Heaps of gold stood at every man's elbow; the cards set out before Skinner were piled with sovereigns.

"Are you all on? Eh, who is it?" to Sinclair. "You're as welcome as drink, Hutchinson. Take the bank a moment, Spud."

As they entered the comfortable bedroom Skinner said:

"I'm driving care away with a mild faro to-night for a change. What is it brings you here? All well at Annandale? That's right! What is it then?"

Hutchinson told his purpose, which Skinner could not assist in any way. He called Sinclair, who had never heard of Stump. Oh, the Kaffir he talked to at Annandale dam? Never knew his name till now, though they had been acquainted ever since Sinclair arrived on the fields. For the rest, he had nothing to tell. Each went his way after that gossip.

The "hotels" of New Rush were not abodes of peace at that time, but Hutchinson was weak, and worried, and tired. He turned out at dawn, and rode to Pniel. If Stump had walked thither at a comfortable rate he had probably arrived about nightfall of the day before, and though he had left the place, people who saw him would still have a clear recollection of the toothless Kaffir. But if Stump had travelled at full speed, he might have left Pniel fifty miles behind. Hutchinson reached Jardine's at evening. In the bar sat an acquaintance, Mr. Bean, late trooper in his own regiment, now an inspector of the Frontier Police. Most fortunate it was. Mr. Bean would understand the situation, and would follow instructions. Forthwith, taking him apart, Hutchinson consulted the inspector.

"Well, sir," said Mr. Bean, "I think I may say your business is settled, and so is Meinheer Stump's. Unless I'm greatly mistook, you'll find the man you're looking for in the police hospital, if he's not yet been taken to the dead-house. We'll see, sir, if you like."

Going along Bean told what he knew. At early dawn on the day previous, "old Davy,"

the keeper of a small canteen at the Drift—the ford—brought word to the station that a wounded Kaffir lay outside his door. He was carried to the hospital, where the doctor pronounced him dead drunk and mortally hurt.

They crossed the river, and Bean pointed out a miserable shed of canvas, some twenty feet from the path.

"That's the place," said he.

"What sort of a man is old Davy?"

"Why, I should say average, for his sort. One don't look for much virtue in a canteen-keeper. Davy's not a chap you'd charge with murder, unless you'd something to go on. But in a general way his sort's a bad 'un. If you're going to ask him questions, I'd wait till the morning if I was you."

They reached the police hospital. The face of the wounded man was so swathed with bandages and sticking-plaister that Hutchinson would have scarcely recognised it. But his ill-formed jaw was not to be mistaken, and a strained withdrawal of the lips showed it to the fullest. Stump had lain insensible for thirty-six hours or more. Hutchinson waited on the doctor.

"I say frankly," replied that pleasant gentleman, "that I can form no opinion. If the patient were white, he would be in his grave by this time, but I've not been long enough in the country to diagnose a Kaffir. Experience as yet has only proved my ignorance. Your boy's skull is fractured, and he has two or three killing wounds besides; but I should be not at all surprised if he got over it."

"How long will it be before he recovers?"

"Mind you, it's a hundred to one he'll die, but if he doesn't—then I have no idea what will happen."

Hutchinson returned with the inspector to Pniel. He asked what clothes Stump wore, and whether anything had been found about him.

"Oh, didn't I tell you, sir? He hadn't a rag on his body."

"Then of course he had been robbed."

"Well, we didn't know he was any body's boy, so the nakedness was not particularly noticed. It would be a strange thing in this camp, if a man lay senseless for an hour at night, and was not robbed."

Next day Hutchinson visited the canteen. As I have said, it was a rag of canvas stretched on boughs. Behind the board on tressels which crossed its width, the sleeping gear of Mr. Davy lay hideously

conspicuous. A blear-eyed, towaled giant was he, cunning and brutal, but he did not look a murderer.

"I want you to tell me all you know about that Kaffir. He is my boy."

Mr. Davy had told all he knew to the police. He mixed a drink for the enquirer, another for himself, and held out his hand for the money.

"Here's a half-sovereign," said Hutchinson. "You may work out the change if you like—on oath——"

"This is a lonely place, mate, after dark, though it's 'twixt the two camps. I don't know nothin' as would harm anybody, an' I can't lie. What is it you want?"

"Had you seen that Kaffir before?"

"Yes, I had. He came here to ask a drink in the afternoon——"

"In the afternoon? At what hour?"

"As near three o'clock as might be, for I'd just tumbled out of a snooze which I take arter dinner. He asks a drink, I say, an' he cuts away smart when I asks him what he means by showing his nose inside a 'spectable canteen. But," he continued, "the nigger got his drink at some black-guard hole, an' more'n one or two; for when I see him again, just at dark, he was in deep water, as they say."

"And that's all? On your oath?"

"Have ye another of them little things, mate?"

"Yes, if you earn it!"

"Well, what I say can't do no one any harm unless they deserve it. When that Kaffir was hanging round at nightfall, a man came to him, a coloured man—I can't say more'n that, I swear. An' they crossed the drift to Pniel. There, I've done."

"You wouldn't know the coloured man again?"

"No, mate; I tell you fair I would not."

Hutchinson paid the sovereign, and went to enquire about Stump. Not the least change was reported. For three days he employed himself and Bean in seeking a clue to his boy's movements, but none turned up. Out of patience, and satisfied now that Stump was a thief, Hutchinson thought of leaving him where he was. Bean and the doctor counselled him in a friendly way to deposit a sum for expenses and for the burial. At this suggestion he rebelled.

"If I have to pay for the fellow, I'd rather have him under my own eye. Can he travel, doctor?"

"I don't know that he can't. We want

his bed badly. You'll take him in a waggon, of course?"

So one day Hutchinson carried off the interesting patient, a senseless bag of bones. In the servants' quarters at Annandale, a group of huts not too near the main building, a pensioned old Hottentot was very glad to take charge of Stump, and she confidently promised to bring him round. Then Hutchinson sought Mr. Wisden, who did not object in the least. A Kaffir more or less, sick or well, made no difference.

Stump's adventure was not very interesting, when all believed that he had met with his deserts; but the problem of his arrival at Pniel within nine hours of leaving Annandale, challenged the wit of the supper-party. It was a lonely road to travel, and, besides, what farmer, digger, or trader would give a seat to a black?

"One of my neighbours has lost a horse, I expect," said Wisden; "that's what it comes to."

"And a near neighbour, too," Hutchinson added.

The next night, when they sat in the study, in which Grace alone was allowed to take a chair, she said:

"This matter interests me so much, father, that I have sent all round to enquire. No one in the neighbourhood has lost a horse."

"Then Stump flew, that's all! When he recovers, he'll tell us the trick, perhaps."

Half an hour afterwards, Grace asked:

"By-the-bye, father, has Sinclair sent back Cherry Ripe?"

"One of Jardine's people brought her in yesterday."

Hutchinson was startled by a sudden thought.

"Did Sinclair go on horseback, then?"

"Skinner had left his cart at Pniel, and they rode here. His boy's horse fell lame, and I lent him Cherry Ripe to return."

"May I ask, sir, whether you saw Sinclair's horse, or whether you took his word for its lameness?"

"I didn't see it. Egad! this suggests a commoner trick than flying! Your boy has a diamond—Sinclair borrows a horse, takes him to Pniel, and then robs him! It's as plain as could be."

"You forget, sir, that Bang Skinner was there. Did Sinclair start, leading his own horse?"

"Yes; I see the difficulty. He pretended to leave his own horse somewhere, I expect."

"Sinclair didn't leave him anywhere along the road," said Grace quietly.

"You have sent to enquire?" asked Wisden, rather astonished. "Well, we may take it for granted that the fellow deceived his master somehow."

"And he was not long in working the trick either," Hutchinson said. "It's clear, if you reckon the time, that Stump must have travelled very quick. That Skinner should not have observed him on that veldt, which is as smooth as a floor, nor noticed that his lame horse had been hard ridden, seems strange."

"What do you mean by that look? Upon my honour, Hutchinson, I would not have believed that one of your name could hint such a charge."

"I hint nothing, sir, but I mean to enquire."

"As deep as you please; but don't insult my friends with your jealous fancies! There, my boy, sit down; I can make allowance, but you must do the same."

Hutchinson sat down, and talked for a few moments constrainedly; then he said good-night. An hour later, just before the bolts were drawn, he dropped his pack of clothes from the bedroom window. In that large household it was easy to slip through the front door unperceived. When all had gone to their rooms, Hutchinson spread his rug on the stoop and lay down.

Sleep would not have come to him that night though he had lain on rose-leaves without a crumpled petal in a yard of thickness. Since Skinner was chosen, he would go, never to return. But to him, feverish and distracted, came a vision white in the moonbeams, beautiful as love.

"Dear Mr. Hutchinson," Grace pleaded, "I beg you to come in. We don't allow even a Kaffir to sleep here beneath the level of the dams. You are ill! Pray, pray return to your room."

"There is nothing I could have refused you an hour ago, Miss Wisden. If this spot is dangerous, I beg you not to stay."

"Then I will fetch father. Please listen to me."

Hutchinson felt that his host's arrival would make the situation ridiculous. He had been sitting on the rug, but now he got up, and instantly became aware of racking pains, of phantasma in his sight, and singular indecision in the use of his limbs. Grace saw him falter and caught his arm.

"You have taken the fever, Mr. Hutchinson! Oh, how dreadful! Can you walk in? Lean on me!"

"I can walk, but not indoors," he answered with the vehemence of heated blood. "I would die in the veldt sooner! I'm honest, Miss Wisden, and it was not jealousy made me speak. God bless you! Let me go!"

"I know it was not jealousy. When father thinks the matter out he will own there is cause for suspicion. Don't give him more pain. Oh, please come in!"

"Do you suspect Skinner? Then you do not love him!"

"I do not, and I never shall."

"Love me, Grace! Try! Promise that, or I would rather die here than live."

"How can I, Mr. Hutchinson? It is ungenerous to ask when you are in this state."

"I will go in and get well. If you are free— You love no one!"

"No one in the world—like that."

"Then I will win your love. Now I obey you."

As Grace cautiously fitted the bars of the door, she watched his feeble progress through the dusky room. Presently Mr. Wisden came, with those simple medicines that alleviate the common fever. But, on returning at dawn, he found this was another kind. To the hot and eager fit had succeeded terrible depression, and the pain of his limbs was such that Hutchinson could not repress his groaning.

"I am afraid yours is rheumatic fever," Wisden said compassionately.

"Give me something that will kill," he answered. "In the other world a man cannot suffer worse than this."

"Cheer up, my boy! I've known lots of fellows who worried through a bout of it."

"They had something to live for, then. I've had misery enough, and there's only misery before me."

When Wisden made his report downstairs, the girls all cried over their work. They picked wool for a bed, but when it was finished, Hutchinson refused to exchange his hard mattress. The doctor came, but he would take no medicine. To treat a man in that state forcibly would be to kill him with sheer pain. Wisden argued and adjured, the girls pleaded and wept—to no purpose. In that mood and that agony Hutchinson wanted to die, as a relief from present sufferings uncheered by hopes for the future; and he was likely to have his wish.

At evening Grace came to her father. She said:

"If I ask Mr. Hutchinson to be patient he will submit."

"Then go at once."

"If he recovers he will expect me to marry him."

"That's absurd! However, save the boy's life, and refer him to me."

"I will not do that, father—whatever I do, not that; but I will beg Mr. Hutchinson to be patient."

"Manage it your own way, dear. Why is the lad so unlucky? He's worth twenty Skinners, after all."

So Grace appealed, and even in that agony the sick man's brow cleared at her words. Then she had Stump removed to the house, and nursed him carefully. The Hopetown doctor examined him and reported.

"Why is that Kaffir like a toad, Miss Grace?" he began, entering the room.

"Is he like a toad? I'm sure I don't know why."

"Because he's awfully ugly, and he bears a precious jewel in his head. Look at that!" The doctor displayed a fine macle diamond. "It was jammed between his broken teeth at the back. I'll bring my tools to-morrow for an operation, and he'll tell us all that has happened in a day or two."

More experienced and more attentive than his confrère of Klipdrift, the doctor fulfilled his prediction. When Grace had laboriously transcribed the wandering narrative, she went to seek her eldest brother, and found him chatting with Skinner, who had just arrived.

"Will you read that, Jack," she said, "whilst we take a stroll in the garden?"

Jack received the paper wondering, and Skinner, wondering, led Grace out.

"What I have given my brother," she began, "is Stump's declaration. He says that he told your groom how he had found a diamond which he was taking to his master. Sinclair assured him that Mr. Hutchinson had gone to New Rush, and offered him a mount as far as Pniel. Allow me to finish! At the first outspan Stump came up with you, and you, Mr. Skinner, asked to look at his diamond. But you told Mr. Hutchinson you had never seen his boy, and Sinclair said he had left him at the dam."

"I can't believe that you take this drunken Kaffir's word before mine."

"I do, Mr. Skinner, and everybody will."

For he does not know your name now, he never saw you before that day, but he will identify you when the time comes as Sinclair's master who rode with him from Annandale."

"And you charge me with waylaying this brute?"

"He does not accuse you of that. But he accuses Sinclair, and my father will issue a warrant and execute it within ten minutes."

"I swear to you, Miss Wisden, that I knew nothing of Sinclair's villainy till next day. The rest I confess, and it makes no matter; I wanted money, and I hoped Stump would sell the diamond cheap. Mr. Wisden had made me a loan, for a speculation as he understood. It's all lost, and my business now was to borrow more. The game is up! It's useless now, Grace, to say that I loved——"

"Quite useless. What shall you do now?"

"I can't go back to the fields," he answered sullenly, "with this charge over me. I shall run to the Free State."

"Are your claims clear?"

"Yes, except some business debts and your father's loan."

"Will you transfer them to Mr. Hutchinson for five hundred pounds down?"

"Yes."

"Then wait in the arbour for ten minutes."

Jack was approaching, very grave. Grace met and turned him, whilst she fetched writing materials.

"Now, Mr. Skinner, here is a cheque for five hundred pounds, and my brother will witness the transfer."

He wrote it and annexed the licences.

"It's a good day for Hutchinson," he said viciously. "A man might spare the price of a wedding-ring out of that pile. Good-bye, Jack! Keep clear of the cards."

Twenty minutes later Bang rode off, not gaily, but not uncheerfully, to try his fortune in other scenes.

Mr. Wisden does not know the truth to this day, and Hutchinson did not know it till long afterwards. They understood that Skinner, in remorse, broken with debts and embarrassments, made over his claims. Mr. Wisden readily advanced what was needful to free them of lawful encumbrance, for it was gambling that swamped the first owner.

In twelve months' time Hutchinson married, and, final proof that his vein of

ill-luck had passed away, he realised his claims in time, and bought a farm near Annandale. De Ruyter received his macle, but he is not to be persuaded that Hutchinson's fortune is not due, in some mysterious way, to his temporary possession of that talisman. Stump is fat and very much married. The last news of Skinner reported him to be winning and losing fortunes daily at Pilgrim's Rest, on the gold-fields.

DOCTORS AND THEIR PATIENTS.

IT has often struck me that a very curious book might be written by any member of the medical profession in the habit of noting down whatever, either in the course of his own practice or in that of his colleagues, may have appeared to him worthy of remembrance. Mr. Jeaffreson's work on the subject of doctors is excellent as far as it goes, rich in anecdote and of sufficiently varied interest to take its place among the most attractive compilations of its kind; there still remains, however, much to be gleaned, especially as regards foreign practitioners, from the innumerable collections of "ana" within the reach of the miscellaneous reader, and it is possible that the following selections from different sources, mostly illustrating the humorous side of the question, may not be unacceptable, as being less generally known.

The Abbé Brueys, author of the comedy *Le Grondeur*, who had been for some years afflicted with ophthalmia, was asked one day by Louis the Fourteenth, with whom he was a great favourite, how his eyes were. "Sire," he replied, "my nephew, the surgeon, assures me that I see considerably better than I did."

Among the celebrated Falconet's occasional patients was a lady in the enjoyment of perfect health, but as confirmed a "malade imaginaire" as Molière's Argan himself. Annoyed at being continually summoned to listen to her frivolous complaints, "Madame," he said, "as far as I can see, there is nothing the matter with you. By your own confession, you eat well and sleep well; so that, if you insist on my prescribing for you, all I can possibly do is to give you something that will make you really ill, in which case I promise that henceforward you will neither be able to do one or the other." Whether this suggestion brought madame to her senses or not is not recorded, but she never called Falconet in again.

His colleague, Malouin, one of the ablest and most justly esteemed practitioners of his day, was somewhat eccentric in his habits, and, when consulted by a patient, only consented to attend to his case on condition that his directions should be blindly followed, and no questions asked. He was, moreover, so sensitive with regard to the dignity of his profession, that the slightest depreciatory allusion to it even from his best friends made him their enemy for life. One of these, who had offended him in this particular, fell dangerously ill, and on the tidings coming to Malouin's ears, he immediately repaired to the sick man's house, and told him that he would cure him, because it was his duty to do so; but that, the malady once vanquished, he would never cross his threshold again; and he kept his word. He was visited one day by a stranger, who asked if he did not recognise him, and on the physician's replying in the negative, "Do you not remember," he said, "enjoining me four years ago to follow a special treatment indicated by you? Well, I have done so conscientiously, and it has cured me at last." Malouin surveyed the speaker admiringly. "You have done that!" he exclaimed. "Allow me to embrace the only man I ever met with who was worthy of being ill."

His eminence, the notorious Cardinal Dubois, when suffering from the complicated malady which ultimately caused his death, sent for Boudon, the surgeon-in-chief of the Hôtel Dieu, and, after explaining his symptoms, gave him haughtily to understand that he had no intention of being treated like the poor wretches in the hospital. "Monseigneur," gravely answered Boudon, "you seem to forget that, in my professional capacity, the poorest of the poor wretches you speak of is an eminence to me."

Frederick the Great, while discussing with two of his favourite officers the chances of success or failure at the approaching battle of Rosbach, remarked that if he lost it he should have no resource left but to retire to Venice, and gain his living by practising as a physician. "What do you think of my plan, general?" he asked one of them. "Sire," familiarly responded the personage addressed, "I think it a very good one, for you will never be easy without killing somebody." On another occasion, turning to the Court Esculapius, "Tell me frankly, doctor," said the king, "how many men in the

course of your life have you sent into the other world?" "About three hundred thousand less than your majesty," was the reply.

A French nobleman, happening to fall dangerously ill in a remote part of Auvergne, it was suggested to him that as the renowned physician Bouvard was on the point of arriving at Clermont, it might be advisable to send for him. "On no account," he objected, "it would be too great a risk. I prefer sending for the village apothecary, for there is just the chance that he may not have the courage to kill me." The same Bouvard, when asked by a lady of rank if she might try a certain newly-invented remedy then in fashion, replied: "By all means, madame, but make haste, and try it before it ceases to cure."

A celebrated Paris surgeon, one of whose patients had recently undergone a painful operation, was taken aside after visiting the sufferer by a relative of the latter, who asked if there were any chance of his recovery. "Not the slightest," he answered, "there never has been." "Then why torture him unnecessarily?" "My good sir," coolly observed the operator, "it would be downright barbarity to tell him the truth. As long as he has strength to hope, let him hope!"

"What profession do you intend choosing?" enquired Voltaire of a young man who had just been presented to him. "That of physician," was the answer. "In other words," said the philosopher of Ferney, "you purpose introducing drugs of which you know little, into bodies you know still less."

The first Napoleon's great medical authority, Corvisart, was deploring one day in the midst of a circle of friends, the premature death of a young colleague who had already attained a brilliant reputation. "It was certainly not for want of proper care and attention that we lost him," he said; "for during the last days of his illness, Hallé, Portal, and I never left him for an instant." "That accounts for it," pithily remarked one of the bystanders. "As Corneille says in Horace, 'Que vouliez-vous qu'il fit contre trois!'"

A fashionable Parisian doctor, more celebrated for his agreeable and witty conversation than for medical skill, was in the habit of paying a visit every afternoon to a dowager of the Faubourg St. Germain, and retailing to her whatever news or gossip he had picked up in the course of the

morning. Arriving one day at his usual hour, he was informed that madame had given strict orders that nobody should be admitted. "Very possibly," he replied, "but that, of course, does not concern me. Take in my name, I am certain she will be at home to me." The servant did as he was bid, and enquired if his mistress would receive Dr. X. "Him least of all," was her answer. "Tell him I am too ill to talk."

Bourdaloue, when asked by a physician how he had hitherto contrived to keep out of the clutches of the faculty, replied, "By taking only one meal a day." "Let this be a secret between you and me, I entreat you," said the other, "for if people knew how easily they could do without us we should not have a single patient left."

A somewhat similar anecdote is related of the celebrated Héquet, who invariably maintained that the most valuable patron of the medical fraternity was a rich man's cook. "Without his assistance," he was wont to say, "nature would be too strong for us."

Dr. Veron, the clever author of the *Bourgeois de Paris*, and ex-manager of the Opera in the Rue Le Peletier, was not, as he himself tells us, particularly fortunate as a professor of the healing art. "I began well," he says, "by curing a porter's wife in my neighbourhood of a slight illness, and as she happened to be both grateful and loquacious, the news spread about in the quarter, and in a very short time I had no less than three patients. One of these, an elderly and remarkably stout lady, on hearing of my supposed ability, had dismissed her own doctor, and called me in. She had a fancy for being bled, and had made up her mind that I, and no one else, should perform the operation, assuring me that she would recommend me to all her friends, and, consequently, make my fortune. Now I must confess that when the moment for distinguishing myself arrived, I felt horribly nervous, and by no means confident in my skill. I had been told by an experienced colleague that the first attempt at blood-letting was generally a failure, and had a growing conviction that I should be no exception to the rule. However, I summoned up all my courage, and boldly plunged the lancet into the ponderous arm held out to me. I must have missed the vein, for no result followed. I tried a second time, and once more ineffectually, upon which the old lady, who began

to see how the land lay, overwhelmed me with a storm of reproaches and injurious epithets, bidding me bandage her arm without an instant's delay, and never presume to set foot within her doors again. Had she contented herself with this abrupt dismissal, I might still have had a chance of redeeming my character in the eyes of my neighbours, but, unfortunately, she did not stop there. Thanks to her implacable tongue the story got wind, and although my old patient the porter's wife spoke up bravely in my defence, she was listened to with incredulity, and public opinion was so manifestly against me that I had no alternative but to submit to the inevitable, and have never practised since."

The following anecdote, whether strictly authentic or not, is sufficiently amusing to merit reproduction. Many years ago, when a certain French marshal was a candidate for the Chamber, he was enjoined by his physician, being of a sanguine temperament, to avoid all unnecessary excitement, and not to interfere personally in the election, but to leave the details to the managing committee. In order to ensure obedience, the Esculapius even went so far as to purge and bleed his patient, who was consequently obliged, from sheer weakness, to keep his room, and ultimately his bed. On every visit of the medical man he was regularly asked by the marshal how matters were progressing, and invariably replied, "Admirably well!" The eventful day arrived at last, and on the ensuing morning the marshal heard from one of his supporters that he had been beaten.

"By whom?" he enquired.

"By that scoundrel of a doctor!"

It is related of Chirac, the celebrated physician of the Regent Duke of Orleans, that once, when summoned to attend a lady patient, he heard some persons in her ante-chamber incidentally mention that the shares in Law's bank—of which he happened to possess a considerable quantity—were going down in value. This so pre-occupied him that, while sitting by the lady's bedside and feeling her pulse, he involuntarily repeated to himself the words, "Going down, going down, going down!" Suddenly, to his astonishment, his patient gave a loud scream of terror, which her servants overhearing, they rushed into the room. "It is all over with me," she cried, "I am about to die! M. Chirac has just felt my pulse, and said three times, 'Going down!'"

"Madame," interrupted Chirac, who had by this time recovered his composure, "you alarm yourself unnecessarily. Your pulse is perfectly healthy, and you will be as well to-morrow as ever you were. I only wish I could say the same of my shares!"

It is presumable that Madame de —, one of the acknowledged leaders of fashion belonging to the Legitimist party in France, considered, like Dr. Pangloss, the world she lived in, "the best of all possible worlds," for she particularly disliked being reminded that she must some day leave it.

Nothing was more obnoxious to her than the slightest allusion to the common lot of humanity, and any casual reference to the forbidden subject in her presence was equivalent, as her servants well knew, to the immediate dismissal of the offender.

She never changed her residence without first satisfying herself that no one had ever died in the house she proposed inhabiting; and on one occasion abandoned her intention of hiring a villa in the South of France, having discovered that a mason employed in its construction had been killed by a fall from the roof. Hearing of the dangerous illness of an intimate friend for whom she professed a great attachment, she sent for her medical attendant, and requested him to ascertain for her how the dear countess really was; but, if the news happened to be bad, on no account to agitate her nervous system by abruptly disclosing it. The doctor, not much liking the errand, but unwilling to run the risk of displeasing a wealthy patient, consented, and repaired to the invalid's house, where he learnt that she had expired a few hours before.

On his return, while meditating in what roundabout way he had best communicate the tidings, Madame de — relieved his embarrassment by enquiring:

"Is she as ill as they say? Can she eat?"

"No, madame."

"She can speak at all events?"

"Not a word."

"Nor hear?"

"Nor hear."

"Mercy on us! Then she must be dead!"

"Allow me to remind you, madame," replied the doctor, "that if anyone has ventured to pronounce that word in your presence, it is not I."

In one of our large provincial towns a middle-aged individual, suffering from indigestion and various other ailments, having been advised to consult the leading physician of the locality, was ushered into the latter's private room. When he had detailed the symptoms of his malady, loss of appetite, sleepless nights, and so forth,

"Ah," said the doctor, "I see how it is; you require plenty of air and exercise, but we will soon bring you round. Nothing so bad for the digestion as sedentary habits, desk-work, and that sort of thing. You must manage to walk as much and as often as your business will allow. By-the-bye, what is your business?"

"Travelling pedlar for the last five-and-twenty years," replied the patient.

Some few months ago one of our medical celebrities was walking down Bruton Street one afternoon with a friend, when they perceived coming towards them a strikingly handsome woman. Dr. Z. immediately seized his companion's arm, and without saying a word crossed rapidly over to the opposite side of the street.

"What is that for?" enquired the other.

"Why, the fact is," stammered out Hippocrates, "I don't particularly wish to meet that lady. I attended her husband last year—a very bad case indeed—and——"

"I understand," interrupted his friend, "he died under your care."

"Worse than that," replied the physician, "a great deal worse. I cured him, and from what I know of her, she is not likely to forgive or forget it."

JENIFER.

BY ANNIE THOMAS (MRS. FENDER-CUDLIP).

CHAPTER XXVII. JOY OR PAIN?

"YOU build too much on the fact that I had a success at my own concert, given in a private house, under favourable conditions, to a picked audience," Jenifer said more than once to Captain Edgecumb.

"You rely too much on the conventional professional jargon Madame Voglio talks to you, darling," he answered. "Whittler says——"

"Don't tell me what he says. I distrust and dislike that man."

"Any way, he recognises your great talent, and is ready to offer you a capital engagement next year in New York."

"I'm not going on the stage."

"That's rather prejudiced, isn't it?" he asked with affected carelessness. "You don't mind singing before the public."

"Nor should I mind acting, if I had it in me, but I feel I haven't it in me. Do be contented," and she laughed, "with the failure I may make on the concert-boards."

"Jenifer, for Heaven's sake don't speak of failure!" he said with a sharp accent as if he were in pain.

"Don't stake too many hopes on me, Harry," she said kindly. "The blow, if I fail, will be very bitter to me. Don't let me feel that it will hurt you too much."

"No, no; don't fear that," he said earnestly; but for all the earnestness of the disclaimer, she felt uneasily conscious that her future husband was staking very high hopes upon her future success.

Whether these hopes were fostered by ambition of the higher sort or by mere greed of gain, it never occurred to her to question for a moment. She took it for granted that as it concerned her, it must necessarily be ambition of the higher sort. Still, it distressed her that he should nourish it too assiduously, knowing, as she now did, that the chances of her ultimate success were pretty nearly balanced by the chances of her ultimate failure.

Jenifer was sore beset with countless suggestions, offers of advice, aid, etc., in these days. She was also harassed and worried by the way in which Captain Edgecumb and her own relations commenced pulling the strings of her life in opposite directions. According to Captain Edgecumb, her whole duty was plainly put before her. Her obvious straightforward course, he argued, was to marry him, and let him, as became a man and a husband, manage all the business part of her career.

with such persistency that the girl began to feel as if she never would belong to herself.

Still, worried as she was, she worked on, and worked so well that Madame Voglio made strenuous exertions, and succeeded in getting her pupil's name so prominently before the giver of some of the best concerts in London, that at last he consented to hear Miss Ray, and having heard her, he held out hopes that at no distant day she should be well placed in one of his programmes.

To Jenifer there was a great deal of real joy in the prospect this promise held out to her. She had grown, as often happens to people who take up a favourite art as a profession in maturity, to identify herself more entirely with the artist-world in her imagination than do many of those who are brought up with the intention and expectation of belonging to it from their childhood. The idea of going back to mere domestic and social life presented a picture of dreary blankness to her. In fact, she was in love with her art in its professional aspect, so what wonder that she had little time for falling in love with Captain Edgecumb!

But he made up for any deficiencies on her side by the ardour with which he proffered his love and pressed his claims. Fortunately for Jenifer he had begun the duties of his secretaryship at the club. And though these duties were not arduous, they still occupied a certain number of hours which would otherwise infallibly have been spent in well-meant but futile endeavours to make himself more essential to the girl of his choice. As it was, she grew to feel that the earlier part of the day was her time of happiness and freedom. About the evening hours there was apt to creep in a feeling of constraint. She felt that she took leave of her better self, and became the object of Captain Edgecumb's adoration.

About the time that the omnipotent concert-giver held out the dazzling hope of an engagement to Miss Ray, Captain Edgecumb pressed the matter of the marriage on Jenifer more ardently and pertinaciously than ever. He got her mother on his side by specious arguments.

"You see when we are married you will have the satisfaction of feeling that Jenifer is always protected when she's out singing at these late affairs. Imagine your own feelings waiting for her night after night, till perhaps one or two o'clock in the morning, knowing that she was alone!"

"It would kill me," Mrs. Ray murmured. "Kill you! Of course it would; you'd

die a dozen deaths a day. Why, my dear Mrs. Ray, Jenifer, with all her sweetness and gentle breeding, would soon degenerate into a thorough Bohemian if she came before the public unmarried."

"What's that?" Mrs. Ray asked.

"Oh, it's the generic term for artists, authors, and actors of the looser—not that exactly—of the freer type. Jenifer, with her narrow experience and wide sympathies, would rush unawares into all sorts of dangerous acquaintanceships and situations if she were left to herself. Whereas with me to protect and look after her, she will soon learn to draw the line sharply, and her professional career will never interfere with her home life."

"You mustn't expect too much of my poor child," Mrs. Ray said in one breath, and in the next she added, "My dear Harry, I am thankful dear Jenny has you to take care of her, for hers will be a perilous place, a perilous place indeed," the mother added proudly, thinking that life was going to be one long round of intoxicating success on the concert-boards for her cherished child.

While the matter was being thus debated above and below board, Jenifer had no young woman friend to turn to for sympathy. It is true Effie was dead against the marriage, but that was for such obviously selfish reasons that Jenifer inclined more kindly and warmly towards Captain Edgecumb after a half-hour's chat with Effie, than at any other time.

Indeed, Mrs. Hubert Ray spoke her views on the subject very plainly to both her husband and Jenifer.

"Why don't you tell him, Hugh, that as he owes knowing Jenifer at all to me, he ought to have the decency to consult my wishes, and not hurry on the marriage until Jenifer has had time to make something and settle with herself whom she'd like to help with it."

"I can hardly remind Edgecumb that the fact of my wife having jilted him for me was the indirect means of making him acquainted with my sister."

"Nonsense, Hugh! You could do it very well. You needn't have any false delicacy about it. Captain Edgecumb fell in love with me when he saw me with Flora, living, dressing, riding, enjoying life as Flora did; he fell into the error of fancying that I was as rich as she is. When he found out his mistake he cooled, and as soon as I met you I relieved him of all difficulty. I've no faith in Captain Edge-

cumb's disinterested affection; he's making a romantic love-lorn ass of himself now about Jenifer, I admit, but I don't believe he'd do it if he didn't think she was going to make a large fortune."

"I certainly can't interfere now," Hubert said decidedly; "there was a time when a word from me would have weighed with Jenny, but I have neglected her too long."

"He'll grab at everything she gets, and we shall never be a penny the better off for it, after all Flora has done," Effie said indignantly. "She's so dazed at present that she's just dreaming and letting things drift. But she'll wake up one day, and then see if she thanks you for having let her slide into matrimony with Captain Edgecumb!"

For once Effie's eloquence did not prevail with her husband. The reflection that he had left his sister to herself too long restrained him, and at last the wedding-day was fixed without Hubert Ray having interposed a word of objection to it.

During all this time Mrs. Archibald Campbell had been assiduous in her attentions to her brother's betrothed. But old Mrs. Edgecumb had never found it convenient to call upon her future daughter-in-law.

It is a fact that the omission of this courtesy did not jar upon Jenifer in the least. Had she been devotedly in love with the man, it is probable that the manners and customs of his mother would have been deeply interesting to her. As it was, she thought nothing at all about the unknown lady.

But when the marriage was an inevitable thing, both Captain Edgecumb and his sister, Mrs. Campbell, brought their mother to the fore dutifully.

"In the usual order of things, it would be for my mother to call upon you, I understand," Captain Edgecumb said to his bride-elect, whose mind was in a chaotic state between the constant calls made upon it by the counter-claims of the concert and the coming wedding; "but you know she's rather peculiar, so I will take you to call on her, and you'll see she'll appreciate the attention."

"Just as you like," Jenifer said acquiescently, and so a day came when, accompanied by her betrothed and his sister, Miss Ray found herself in the presence of her future mother-in-law.

Mrs. Edgecumb, a large, well-nurtured, "surprisingly young-looking" matron, whose fixed belief in the superiority of her

own locality, fashions, set, surroundings, and social status generally, was never disputed by any member of her own family, received Jenifer kindly enough after a fashion, but it was very much after the fashion in which the Queen of England might receive a Tahitan princess. She regarded Jenifer with looks of curious amusement, and remarked affably, but audibly, to her daughter Belle, that it was really "funny that a little country girl should want to rush into publicity in the way she did."

"Not," she added, "that I need mind it at all if Harry doesn't, and I suppose he doesn't, as he wants to marry her. Still, it strikes me as singular, and I feel I shall have some difficulty in assimilating her with my circle."

"She's a very nice girl—much too good and bright for any man I know," Mrs. Campbell said warmly, as Captain Edgecumb took Jenifer on a tour of inspection through some of the chief objects under the paternal roof.

"You don't include your brother in that sweeping assertion, of course? Harry has excellent qualities and admirable abilities. If she makes him a good wife, he will develop a very fine character."

"She'll make him a good wife, never fear; but I don't think, mother, that Harry will develop into anything very remarkable. He has got the best of it in the bargain they're making."

"That I never shall allow," Mrs. Edgecumb said decidedly, and from that day she resolved to try and keep her daughter-in-law down.

"What sort of person is her mother?" she asked presently.

"A sweet, simple-minded old lady; very unworldly, very devoted to Jenifer, and very much inclined to accept Harry at his own valuation."

"No pretension to fashion or style, I suppose?"

Mrs. Edgecumb glanced complacently at the skirt of her own rich-textured well-cut robes as she spoke.

"There's no pretension of any kind about her," Belle said carelessly; and Mrs. Edgecumb heaved a sigh of relief, which she presently explained by saying:

"I must say it's a burden on my mind that I shall not have to make parties for her, and introduce her to my circle. A rustic old lady would hardly be in place in

this district. Where does Harry think of living?"

"Harry's plans are very sketchy. I think he will live in any neighbourhood where his wife will be likely to make most money. In fact, if he could get lodgings in the doorway of St. James's Hall, I believe he would take them."

"It's to be fervently hoped that she will make a great deal of money by her singing, but it's a shocking, shocking way of making it," Mrs. Edgecumb said piously.

Then the youthful pair under discussion came back from their tour of inspection, and Mrs. Edgecumb was courteously kind to her future daughter-in-law, in a half-curious, half-amused way as before.

"When you've taken a house I shall be very glad to give you any hints and help I can about furnishing it," Mrs. Edgecumb said to Jenifer before she left. "Harry's taste is exquisite—exactly like mine, and he will like to have things in his new house as much like his old home as possible."

"You're very kind, but I think I shall carry out my own ideas as far as I can in furnishing," Jenifer said firmly. She was a little overpowered by the portly, pleasant, well-preserved matron, but she knew that, if she suffered this feeling to grow, the mother-in-law would overpower her altogether.

"I'm afraid your own ideas won't help you much in furnishing in London," Mrs. Edgecumb said, wagging her head affably. "Harry has not been accustomed to rusticity, you must remember; but, whenever you're in doubt, come to me, and I'll put you in the right path to please him."

"I'd rather displease him all the days of my life," Jenifer said mentally, and even as she thought it Captain Edgecumb said:

"My mother's is about the best-ordered house I know. If you keep things going as well in ours, dear, you'll do well indeed."

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Mrs. John read the enclosure first, as it came first to hand, and as she recognised Mrs. Pybus's writing with a misgiving that the old lady was, as usual, at the bottom of all the mischief. Having read Mrs. Pybus's letter half mechanically at first, and a second time intelligently, she had no appetite for Mr. Tuck's epistle, and, indeed, forgot it altogether. They were at breakfast, and the old lady, who made her eyes do the duty of her ears in addition to their own, took in the situation at sight of her writing. She made at once preparations for war, closed all the gates, and manned all the walls; or in other words, suddenly became stone deaf, so that no word of Mrs. John's could force its way into her ears, and at the same time prepared to act on the offensive at a moment's notice.

But this was no war that words could wage. A fierce and almost fell expression in Mrs. John's worn, white face frightened even the unobservant Rev. John, as she handed him the letter.

"John, you must choose between your mother and me," rising to leave the room. This from his loyal and long-suffering wife, who all these years, for his sake, had borne the bitter yoke with divine meekness! And she meant it too. About this there was no mistake. Nor did he wonder at it when he read the spiteful letter—the source of all this sorrow.

"Mother, you've killed Mary as well as the boy," tossing her the letter.

"Guardati d'aceto di vin dolce," or, as old Fuller puts it, "Some men, like a tiled house, are long before they take fire; but once on flame, there is no coming near to quench them." Such was the Rev. John, hard to kindle, hard to quench. He was kindled now, to his mother's amazement and indignation.

"I'm a murderess, am I?" cried Mrs. Pybus, rising to shake metaphorically the dust of this ingrate house from her feet, her head and her hands quivering as with palsy. "I'm a murderess, am I? The child that I've moiled, and toiled, and slaved like a black negro slave to bring up; and washed him and dressed him, when those who had it to do knew no more than the baby where a pin was to go. And who was it taught him? Who taught him Sunday and weekday, morning, noon, and night? The hours and hours I gave to that child, and all to be thrown away!"

At this pathetic presentation of Archie's suicide as a wicked waste of all her time and toil, the old lady was moved almost to

tears; but the Rev. John not being as penitent as she looked for, she suddenly reseat herself with the resolved air of martyrdom.

"You'd better go and ask her if the police are to be sent for, and if I'm to be taken to prison as a murderess. This is my reward for all these years I've been a servant in my own son's house," with a burst of tears. "And my own dear daughter Margaret might beg and pray on her bended knees for me to stay with her; but 'no,' I said, 'you are well off, you are happy, you made a happy marriage, you don't want me; I must go where I'm wanted, and do what I can to make my poor son's life less unhappy;' and this is my return!"

Here Mrs. Pybus paused to be appeased by an apology and soothed into a week's sulk, as the least she could let her son compound his offence for; but the Rev. John remained obdurately and moodily silent, whereon the old lady waxed more pathetic.

"John, I see how it is; because I am old and can't now do the work of two servants, she grudges me the bit I eat, and would turn me out to starve. Well, it can't be for long. I shall not be here much longer, and you'll be sorry when I'm gone."

"When do you think of going, mother?" asked the Rev. John coldly.

After his manner he had heard all this as in a dream, and imagined his mother was, as usual, threatening him with a flight to Margaret. It certainly was exasperating to be asked with a sneer by your own son when you intend to die, in the tone of an undertaker anxious to be punctual with the hearse. The shock of this unexpected barbarity flung the old lady into hysterics, or a very good imitation of them; and the Rev. John, in much distress, first tore at the bell, and then, upon the servant coming and applying restoratives successfully, he hastened, helpless, to find Mrs. John. He found Mrs. John sitting, as though turned to stone, in her room.

"When is she going?" she asked as he entered.

"She is ill, Mary; in hysterics, I think."

Mrs. John smiled, a smile which was as near an approach to a sneer as had ever disfigured her face.

"Mary dear," said the Rev. John, sitting by her side, taking her cold hand in his and speaking hesitatingly, but yet with, for him, a singular concentration. "Mary dear, I know the burden I have put upon you all these years, and I know how you have borne it." Then, after a

slight pause, he continued in a voice that trembled under the weight of feeling it conveyed: "I've never said to you all I felt about it, Mary, but I've said it to God. I never forget it night and morning in thanking Him for all you have been to me, for your being all to me, dear—all to me. But, Mary, my mother was all to me once, and had her heavy burden to bear. I never told you, for I couldn't bear to speak of it, or think of it, that my father was a drunkard—killed himself with drinking. He would have killed me too, if it hadn't been for my mother. He hated me, I think, because I was so afraid of him. I couldn't sleep, for terror, unless mother locked me in and hid the key. And he came to know this, and would ask for the key, and beat her—I could hear him beat her—I can hear him now," with a troubled and faraway look in his dreamy eyes.

Poor Mary, clinging with both arms round his neck like a little child, sobbed out, as she kissed him, "Oh, John, forgive me."

This glimpse into the Rev. John's heart stirred her deeply, as much from its rarity as from its pathos. He was at once the most reserved and inarticulate of men, and neither would nor could express half what he felt.

Mrs. John, having dried her eyes, hastened to translate penitence into penance by hurrying down to minister to the old lady. It was a penance. It wasn't in human nature to regard it otherwise; but it was a penance endured to the end, as bravely as it was undertaken; yet it was as difficult as it was disagreeable. Peace cannot, any more than war, be made by one person, and if it can hardly be called a battle, "*ubi tu pulsas, ego vapulo tantum*," neither can it well be called a reconciliation when the reciprocity is of the Irish sort, all on one side. Upon Mrs. John's appearance Mrs. Pybus suddenly became deaf and dumb as a stone. She was as much moved by Mrs. John's attentions as Sydney Smith's tortoise by the little maid stroking its shell. It was no use for Mrs. John to ask her how she was, to beg her to lie down, or to set a glass of wine beside her. In truth, Mrs. Pybus's natural sullenness had been so intensified by the childishness of old age as to be impregnable. Mrs. John had at last to retire for reinforcements, returning with the Rev. John. Upon the Rev. John's appearance in the field the old lady changed her tactics. Sulk was the most ineffective of weapons against him, since it only gave

his mind the leave of absence of which it was always in search. She rose to receive him, therefore, with a dignified apology for being found still in his house. She had not been very well, and did not feel quite equal to the labour of packing. But she was better now, and thought she might be able to get upstairs if the servant could be spared to assist her.

"But why should you pack, mother? Mary won't hear of your going."

This Mary herself confirmed by saying simply: "It would be a great trouble to me if you left us, Mrs. Pybus."

The old lady being thus importuned to stay became, of course, importunate to go.

"If Martha can't be spared," she continued, ignoring absolutely what was said to dissuade her, "I think I can manage without her, thank you," tottering towards the door. "No, John, no, not the arm of a murderer," waving off his proffered help with a melodramatic gesture.

As Mrs. John's assistance would have been still more insupportable, there was nothing for it but to ring for Martha, and bid her help the old lady to her room.

"Will she go, Mary?" asked the Rev. John anxiously.

"I don't think so. What did you say to her?"

"I said something about her killing you as well as the boy."

Mrs. John only looked her amazement at this tremendous outburst of the Rev. John's.

"It was your face, dear," he added apologetically in answer to her look.

"I'm sorry I looked so wicked, but I felt wicked."

"She's made you very unhappy, Mary," remorsefully.

"She's been so unhappy herself it has soured her, John. I might have been so if I hadn't had the best husband in the world," looking up with moist eyes into his wistful face.

"Ah, Mary!" was his sole reply, but the tone expressed that she endowed him with the wealth of her own goodness.

"She always saved you from—from your father, John?" tremulously, for Archie's tormented school-life was also in her mind at the moment.

"Always when she could; but she couldn't always. I had a terrible time of it, Mary, and my nerves never recovered it. You must make allowances for me too, dear, for my shyness and awkwardness."

Mrs. John, with her heart full of Archie's wretchedness, realised so vividly

the wretchedness of the Rev. John's childhood, that she clasped and pressed his hand soothingly in both of hers.

"He wasn't a good man, dear," continued he. "It wasn't only that he was a drunkard and profligate, but—I may as well tell you all—he'd been a Quaker," in a low voice, and as though he said, "He'd been a burglar."

Mrs. John saw nothing ludicrous in the manner and matter of this confession, for she accepted her husband's baptismal theory implicitly, Tom Chown notwithstanding. It could not escape her that Tom, though slow in wit and work and walk, was not in other respects a saint, rather the contrary. But his imperfections suggested to her that Tom's baptism, not her husband's theory, was in fault. As the Rev. John was nervous and short-sighted, it was very probable that Tom, like Achilles, had not been wholly immersed; some part of his person, his heel perhaps—for he was the laziest of youths—had escaped.

Here it may be in place to say that Mrs. John's acceptance of her husband's superstition was not due altogether to her wifely loyalty. The Rev. John was really a very learned man in all that kind of learning, which, according to Plato, may make a man a very wise philosopher and yet leave him "so ignorant that he hardly knows whether his neighbour is a man or some other animal." In fact the Rev. John would have made a model Realist in the days of the Schoolmen, for he lived among abstract unrealities.

Now, if any man will let any theory whatsoever take entire possession of his mind, it is astonishing what confirmations of it he will find in all he hears, sees, or reads. His theory, like certain diseases, absorbs and assimilates all the nourishment he takes, rejecting what it cannot digest. "To what side soever a man inclines," says Montaigne, "so many appearances present themselves to confirm him in it, that the philosopher Chrisippus said, 'he would learn the doctrines only of Zeno and Cleanthes, his masters; for as to proofs and reasons he should find enough of his own.'" All the Rev. John's learning—itsself of the moonshiny kind—went to feed this absorbing theory, and was brought to bear upon it to the conversion of Mrs. John. Now, Mrs. John had all the higher idea of the Rev. John's learning, because of his ignorance of practical matters. The fixed stars give us less light than the planets, because they are so much higher above us;

yet the fixed stars are suns in their own spheres, while the planets are but dark earthy worlds like our own. Reasoning from some such analogy, Mrs. John came to regard the Rev. John's childish ignorance of worldly matters as presumptive evidence of high unworldly wisdom. Therefore, she accepted implicitly his baptismal theory, and was not in the least disposed to smile when he said, in the low tone of a terrible confidence, "He'd been a Quaker."

"Had she?" asked Mrs. John, thinking she'd got the clue to the old lady's tempers.

"She!" exclaimed the Rev. John, rather hurt by the suggestion. "She was a clergyman's daughter, Mary. There's no doubt at all of her having been baptised in her infancy, none at all. It is true she will never tell me where; but that is because she got it into her head that I wished to verify her age."

Mrs. John smiled, for Mrs. Pybus took liberal discount off her age in a business-like proportion to the amount of her debt to time—five per cent. from fifty, ten per cent. from seventy years.

"She may have been baptised late," added the Rev. John meditatively, more to himself than to Mrs. John. "They were so careless in those days." He couldn't conceal from himself that Mary, reasoning inductively, might have inferred her to have been a Baptist at least. "But I think it was her married life," he mused aloud after another pause. "It was terrible. I should like to make the end of her days happy," he sighed wistfully. "She is miserable with Margaret."

"I shall do all I can, John," said Mary penitently.

"You cannot do more than you've always done, Mary. But I was afraid she had got beyond even your patience, dear. You think she won't go?"

"I think she won't if I offer to help her to pack," said Mrs. John hesitatingly, as if rather ashamed of the stratagem.

But, indeed, Mrs. Pybus was already repentant, and needed less than this to decide her to stay. When she had got all her things together and had set Martha to pack them according to her directions, she began to cool and to relent. If she evacuated the citadel she might never be able to re-enter it. It was easier to keep than to take. At this point of her repentance Mrs. John appeared, to ask "May I help you to pack, Mrs. Pybus?"

"Martha, go ask your master if it is by his order I'm turned out of this house."

Mrs. John felt keenly the degradation of having a servant dragged into the affair, but said only (inaudibly, to Mrs. Pybus):

"Martha, you'd better help Jemima. I don't think Mrs. Pybus will want you again."

"Yes, mum."

Martha would have gone to Jericho for Mrs. John, but hardly to heaven at Mrs. Pybus's invitation. Martha being gone, Mrs. John herself sought out the Rev. John and sent him to make apologies and peace, which were made accordingly.

As, however, Mrs. John had warned her husband against mentioning her name to his mother, the old lady imagined it was her message, sent to him by Martha, which brought him to her feet, and that she had countermined Mrs. John's malevolent machinations. It was the first time she had succeeded in winning over her son to her side, and her triumph was as "insolent" in the modern, as it was, in the obsolete, sense of the word. Instead of a Trappist course of silence, fasting, and the Book of Common Prayer, she amazed Mrs. John, amazed even the unobservant Rev. John, by her almost boisterous spirits, and by the ceaseless flow of information which she imparted to her son exclusively during dinner. Mrs. John she not only ignored, but snubbed ostentatiously; chiefly by taking care to address her son, and secure his attention whenever his wife attempted to speak to him. If Mrs. John had been in less wretched spirits she must have cried with laughter, not so much at the old lady's incongruous assumption of the character of an agreeable rattle, as at the incongruity of her performance of the part. For, indeed, Mrs. Pybus attempted to express simultaneously incongruous attitudes of mind—a buoyant sense of being perfectly at home in her own son's house, and a stern sense of Mrs. John's parricidal attempt to evict her. Therefore her nodding of the head from side to side, her light, easy, airy conversation, her jokes, and her laughter, were grafted on a manner stiff, stern, austere, grim. It was a dance of death.

Even the Rev. John, as we said, was amazed by her demeanour—indeed, alarmed by it, as Olivia was amazed and alarmed by the fantastic affectations of Malvolio. He took it for a continuation of what seemed her hysterical attack that morning, and was so disquieted by it that he resolved to put her under Dr. Grice's care when he called to see Mrs. John. Meantime he must advise her to take care of herself and keep her bed.

Now, though Mrs. Pybus, when in the sulks, was given to burying herself in the "Order for the Visitation of the Sick," there was nothing she hated more, next to being thought old, than to be thought ill. Therefore, this idea of putting her into Dr. Grice's hands was not a happy one of her son's. Nor was he happy either in his well-meant caution to her to take more care of herself. When she was in the middle of a sprightly description, sparkling with wit and point, of her discomfiture of a Mrs. Sellers; in the midst, we say, of this irresistible description and of a burst of forced laughter, the Rev. John, with a face of grave concern and in a shout that might have waked the dead, pulled her up.

"You'd better go to bed, mother."

If the Rev. John had permitted himself to shout, "Go to Bath, mother," she couldn't have been more direly offended.

"I shall not go to bed, John," she shouted back with a fierceness which seemed to confirm his diagnosis of her case. Upon Dr. Grice's calling a little later, the Rev. John asked him to see, and if necessary, prescribe for his mother, who seemed in a very excited and hysterical state. The doctor, who hated the old lady for her hatred of Mrs. John, was not going to flatter her by considering her ill—for a doctor's flattery takes this odd form. He pooh-poohed the idea of her being hysterical as preposterous; but consented to put her son out of the pain of anxiety by seeing her. He found her in the drawing-room alone, ruminating moodily over her son's insult, nowise excited now, but sulky and morose. When the doctor asked her how she did, she replied conventionally and of course that she was quite well. Whereupon the doctor thought it necessary to prescribe only rest, which would at least put and keep her out of Mrs. John's way.

"You'd better go to bed, Mrs. Pybus," he shouted with more than his usual brusqueness.

"I shall not go to bed," she cried in a paroxysm of fury, for now she had no doubt that it was Mrs. John who had set her son and the doctor to bait her with the same insult. When the doctor, now convinced that she really was ill, would have felt her pulse, she snatched her hand from him and hissed out: "She wants to have me locked up in a madhouse, does she? Not while there's law in the land!"

The doctor began to think that this was not at all a bad suggestion, and brought

back such a report to her son that he maddened his mother for a month by his treatment of her as a patient in the most critical condition of mind and body.

KING HENRY THE FOURTH, PART THE FIRST.

THE History of King Henry the Fourth, "with the Battell of Shrewseburie between the King and Lord Henrie Percy, surnamed Henrie Hotspur of the North, with the humorous conceites of Sir John Falstaffe," was first published in quarto, in 1598. Other quarto editions were issued in 1599, 1604, 1608, and in 1622, before the appearance of the folio collection of 1623. Shakespeare founded his two parts of King Henry the Fourth, and also his King Henry the Fifth, upon an early drama, very rude of form, entitled *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth*, which, although first printed presumably in 1594, had been for some years in possession of the stage. The comedian, Richard Tarleton, who is recorded to have personated two of its characters—Derrick, the clown, and the judge who was struck by Prince Henry—died in the year 1588. This old play has been much condemned by modern criticism; the comic parts have been pronounced "low buffoonery without the slightest wit," and the tragic passages "monotonous stupidity without a particle of poetry." Yet from this worthless work Shakespeare's magic conjured those very noble historical dramas, unless, indeed, we are to suppose that he also employed as his materials certain old plays of which copies are no longer extant.

Davies, in his *Dramatic Miscellanie*, states his opinion that "the original performer of Falstaff was, doubtless, that excellent comedian, W. Lowin: the praise and boast of his time for variety of comic parts." Davies intended, no doubt, to refer to John Lowin, an eminent actor of Shakespeare's time, and the actor commended by the old cavalier Trueman in Wright's *Historia Histrionica*, 1699: "In my time, before the wars, Lowin used to act, with mighty applause, Falstaff, Morose, Volpone, Mammon in *The Alchemist*, and Melantius in *The Maid's Tragedy*." But Lowin was born in 1576; he was, therefore, too young an actor to be originally entrusted with the part of Falstaff in Henry the Fourth, first printed in 1598, and probably brought upon the stage some time before. Moreover, Lowin did not become a member of

the company called the King's Players, with which Shakespeare was associated, until 1603. It seems more likely that Falstaff found his first personator in John Heminge, an actor many years the senior of Lowin, although there is no evidence in support of this proposition beyond Malone's rather vague statement that "in some tract," of which he had forgotten to preserve the title, Heminge was said to have been the original performer of Sir John. Davies further permits himself to guess that the Prince of Wales was represented by Richard Burbadge, "who was tall and thin"—an unwarrantable assertion—and that Hotspur was played by Joseph Taylor, "who was fat and scant of breath," an equally bold assumption; but Davies takes it for granted that Taylor was the first Hamlet, and that the actor's physical characteristic obtained therefore mention and apology in the poet's text. But this arrangement of the first cast of Henry the Fourth is purely conjectural.

On the last day of December, 1660, Mr. Pepys records his purchase of a copy of the play, and his visit to the new theatre, Killigrew's, to see Henry the Fourth acted. "But my expectation being too great," he writes, "it did not please me as otherwise I believe it would; and my having a book, I believe did spoil it a little." Eighteen months later he attends another performance of Henry the Fourth, as he calls it; and now he pronounces it to be "a good play." On the 2nd November, 1667, he sees the play again, "and, contrary to expectation," he notes, "was pleased in nothing more than in Cartwright's speaking of Falstaff's speech about 'What is honour!'" The house was full of Parliament men, it being holiday with them; "and it was observable," Pepys records, "how a gentleman of good habit sitting just before us eating of some fruit, in the midst of the play did drop down as dead, being choked; but with much ado Orange Moll did thrust her finger down his throat and brought him to life." The cast of the play at this time was probably as stated by Downes in his *Roscious Anglicanus*, 1708: King, Mr. Winterset; Prince, Mr. Burt; Hotspur, Mr. Hart; Falstaff, Mr. Cartwright; and Poyns, Mr. Shatterel. Cartwright had been one of Killigrew's company from its earliest date, and seems to have been an admirable comedian, personating such characters as Corbaccio in *The Fox*, Morose in *The Silent Woman*, Sir Epicure Mammon in *The Alchemist*. He also appeared as Brabantio,

as Major Oldfox in Wycherley's *Plain Dealer*, and as Apollonius in Dryden's *Tyrannic Love*. By his will, dated 1686, he left his books, pictures, and furniture to Dulwich College, where his portrait still remains. The character of Falstaff was also played upon Killigrew's stage by the favourite actor, John Lacy; his performance "never failed of universal applause," writes Gerard Langbaine, in 1691. In his later years, Kynaston seems to have been assigned the part of the King. Cibber writes of the "real majesty of the actor, and of the terrible menace of his whisper to Hotspur, 'Send us your prisoners,' and specially Kynaston's acting in the scene between the King and the Prince of Wales. In January, 1688, Mr. Pepys is found visiting the two playhouses in quest of entertainment "and to gaze up and down," "and there did by this means," as he confesses, "for nothing see an act in *The School of Compliments* at the Duke of York's house, and *Henry the Fourth* at the King's house; but not liking either of the plays," he took his coach again and returned home. In the same year he visits the King's house again, and sees a piece of *Henry the Fourth*, at the end of the play; he owns, however, that he had gone to the theatre "thinking to have gone abroad with Knipp." But it was too late, and the actress had "to get her part against to-morrow in *The Silent Woman*, and so," says Pepys, "I only set her at home and away home."

At the end of 1699, or the beginning of 1700, there occurred a revival of *Henry the Fourth*, at the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields. Betterton had some years before succeeded Hart in the character of Hotspur; he now appeared as Falstaff. His Hotspur had won great admiration. Cibber applauds the appropriateness of his "wild impatient starts," his "fierce and flashing fire." Steele extols the gallantry of his performance as Falstaff; "his power of pleasing did not forsake him," says Davies. The critics, his contemporaries, allowed that he had hit the humour of Falstaff better than any that had aimed at it before. The revival of *Henry the Fourth* was said to have "drawn all the town more than any new play which had been produced of late." Hotspur was now represented by Verbruggen, and the King by Berry. The acting version of the play was prepared by Betterton, who contented himself with some few omissions and re-arrangements. The character of Glendower was retained with

great part of the scene opening the third act; these have usually been among the suppressions of the modern stage. The play was reproduced at the large theatre in the Haymarket, when Betterton probably appeared as Falstaff for the last time. The Prince of Wales was now represented by Mr. Robert Wilks, and with signal success. Davies accounted the performance "one of the most perfect exhibitions of the theatre." Barton Booth undertook the subordinate character of Sir Richard Vernon.

In relation to other performances of the play at this time, and in later years, Davies writes that in the part of the King the actor known as "the Elder Mills" lacked that dignity of deportment which was so eminently supplied by the tragedian Boheme; that Habard was decent, but without spirit; that Bensley was chiefly deficient in power. While Betterton still lived, George Powell, "who was malicious enough to envy the great actor, and weak enough to think himself capable of supplying his place," acted Falstaff after Mr. Betterton's manner, with imitation even of Mr. Betterton's occasional air of suffering when acutely attacked by the gout, "which sometimes surprised him in the time of action." Probably Mr. Powell's efforts were not very well received by the public. After Betterton's demise other of the Drury Lane players attempted the part of Falstaff, "but most of them," says Davies, "with very indifferent success." By the particular command of Queen Anne, Booth appeared as Falstaff for one night only. He did not repeat the experiment; he was perhaps conscious of his own deficiency in the character, or he preferred to appear as Hotspur. The Elder Mills was permitted to try his skill for a few nights in the part. It was agreed, however, that "his sober gravity could not reach the inimitable mirth" of Falstaff. The next essay was made by the comedian Harper, who obtained some success in the character, less, it was said, by his intelligence, than because of his plump person and round face, his full voice and honest laugh.

When Booth played Hotspur at Drury Lane in 1716 to the Falstaff of Mills and the Prince of Wales of Wilks, the comedian Johnson and Joe Miller, of jest-book fame, played the carriers, and the lady who was afterwards known as Mrs. Booth, appeared as Lady Hotspur. Booth's Hotspur obtained extraordinary applause. Davies describes his strong yet harmonious pipe in reaching "the highest note of excla-

matory rage without hurting the music of its tone." His gestures were said to be "ever in union with his utterance, while his eye constantly combined with both to give a correspondent force to the passion;" his port was "quick, yet significant, accompanied with princely grandeur." At the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields, in 1721, the play was represented with the low comedian Bullock as Falstaff, and the famous Mr. Quin as the King. A year later, and the warm applause bestowed upon his Falstaff of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, encouraged Quin to essay the superior Falstaff of Henry the Fourth, which became one of his most esteemed impersonations. The actor was found to possess in an eminent degree the ostensible or mechanical part of the character. "In person he was tall and bulky," writes Davies, "his voice strong and pleasing, his countenance manly, and his eye piercing and expressive." His performance was animated throughout, but not equally happy; "his supercilious brow, in spite of assumed gaiety, sometimes unmasked the surliness of his disposition." Generally he was regarded as the most intelligent and judicious Falstaff seen upon the stage since the days of Betterton.

At the close of 1746 and the beginning of 1747 occurred rival performances of the play at Drury Lane and Covent Garden Theatres. Spranger Barry was the Drury Lane Hotspur, with Berry as Falstaff, the beautiful Mrs. Woffington lending her assistance as Lady Percy, and Theophilus Cibber appearing as Glendower. At Covent Garden, Garrick and Quin met upon the stage as Hotspur and Falstaff, Ryan representing the Prince of Wales, with Mrs. Vincent as Lady Percy. Quin's triumph was the more complete in that Garrick's Hotspur greatly disappointed expectation. He was found to lack presence; "his person was not formed to give a just idea of the gallant and noble Hotspur;" and his dress was objected to—"a Land frock and a Ramilies wig were thought to be too insignificant for the character." Fault was even found with his delivery. The fine flexibility of his voice could not entirely conquer "the high rant and continued rage of the enthusiastic warrior." It was early in his career, and he had not yet acquired, we are told, "that complete knowledge of modulation which he was afterwards taught by more experience." He appeared as Hotspur upon four or five occasions, when he was seized with a

violent cold and hoarseness. He relinquished the part, and he did not resume it. During his illness the public expressed as much concern for him "as though he had been a prince of the blood, greatly honoured and beloved." The door of his lodgings was every day "crowded with servants who came from persons of the first rank, and indeed of all ranks, to enquire after his health." Barry's Hotspur was judged to be "pleasing and respectable," because of his noble figure, rapid and animated expression, and lively action; yet his performance was thought to lack something of "military pride and camp humour." A like deficiency was discovered, at a later date, in the Hotspur of "Gentleman" Smith, albeit his personation was otherwise held to be "well marked, with fine impetuosity and dignified deportment." As Falstaff, Berry "was neither exact in his outline nor warm in his colouring." His was "the Falstaff of a beerhouse;" the while Quin's Falstaff was "the dignified president where the choicest viands and the best liquors were to be had."

At Drury Lane, in 1762, Love was the Falstaff—a comedian who "wanted not a good share of vis comica, and laughed with ease and gaiety." Holland was the Hotspur and John Palmer the Prince of Wales at this date. Twelve years later, and there was a new Falstaff at Covent Garden in the person of the popular Ned Shuter, who was said to supply by archness and drollery what he lacked in judgment. "He enjoyed the effects of his roguery with a chuckle of his own compounding, and rolled his full eye when detected with a most laughable effect." Smith was the Hotspur, and Lewis the Prince of Wales of this performance. The actors Woodward and Yates are said to have "put on Falstaff's habit for one night only." They were not encouraged to repeat their ventures, which were of rather a diffident character; otherwise, it was thought that repeated practice would have enabled them to reach the mark "which they modestly despaired to hit."

We then arrive at the performance of Falstaff by Henderson, first seen in London at the Haymarket in 1777, James Aikin appearing as Hotspur, Younger as the King, and John Palmer as the Prince of Wales.

The success of Henderson as Falstaff was very great. It was admitted that the actor had many difficulties to contend with, that neither in person, voice, or countenance did

he seem qualified for the part. His animation and judgment, however, enabled him to supply all deficiencies. He had not Quin's force and arrogance of manner; but, in the more frolicsome, gay, and humorous situations, Henderson, in the opinion of Davies, was superior to all the Falstuffs he had ever seen. His delivery of the soliloquies was especially applauded for its art and true humour. He was engaged at Drury Lane on the closing of the Haymarket in 1777, and in 1779 he was playing Falstaff at Covent Garden. At this period the text was strictly followed, and Falstaff was required to take the dead Hotspur upon his back, a proceeding which never failed to move the galleries to extraordinary mirth. Quin had been able, with little difficulty, to perch Garrick on his shoulders, who in that position, looked, it was said, like a dwarf on the back of a giant. It was no light task, however, even for Quin to raise the tall grenadier-like figure of Spranger Barry; and, of course, Falstaff's labours were much increased when the dead Hotspur would lend him no assistance. The trouble Henderson experienced in raising "Gentleman" Smith from the ground and placing that robust actor upon his shoulders, led to an alteration in the traditional stage business of the performance. "So much time was consumed in this pick-a-back business," we read, "that the spectators grew tired, or rather disgusted. It was thought best for the future that some of Falstaff's ragamuffins should bear off the dead body."

At the Haymarket in 1786, on the occasion of her benefit, Mrs. Webb, a prodigiously stout lady, ventured to represent Falstaff. In the same year, at Covent Garden, Mr. Thomas Ryder, from Dublin, essayed the part, with Lewis as the Prince of Wales, and Holman as Hotspur. John Palmer was the next Falstaff, at the Opera House, whither the Drury Lane Company had moved during the rebuilding of their theatre in 1791, when John Kemble appeared as Hotspur, Bensley as King Henry, and Wroughton as the Prince of Wales. Of Kemble's Hotspur, Sir Walter Scott has written in very laudatory terms, greatly commending the actor's delivery of one passage in particular, as an instance of happy interpretation of the author's text. Hotspur is endeavouring to recall the name of a place in England:

In Richard's time—what do you call the place?
A plague upon't; 'tis in Gloucestershire.
'Twas where the madcap Duke his uncle kept—
His uncle York.

As Sir Walter states: "Through all this confusion of mangled recollection, Kemble chafed and tumbled about his words with the furious impatience of an angry man who has to seek for a pen at the very moment he is about to write a challenge. Then the delight with which he grasped at the word when suggested—'at Berkeley Castle.' 'You say true!' The manner in which Kemble spoke those three words, and rushed forward into his abuse of Bolingbroke, like a hunter surmounting the obstacle which stopped his career, was electrical. The effect on the audience was singular. There was a tendency to encore so fine a piece of acting." Scott was sensible, however, that Kemble's histrionic method was apt to err on the side of elaborateness. "John Kemble is a great artist," he wrote to Miss Baillie; "but he shows too much of his machinery. I wish he could be double-capped, as they say of watches." Kemble was ambitious of playing Falstaff, and professed to have formed an original conception of the character; but he felt, perhaps, that his efforts in comedy were not very favourably viewed by his public. He left, therefore, Falstaff to be personated by his corpulent brother Stephen, who acquired fame in that he performed the fat knight "without stuffing." He first played Falstaff in London at Drury Lane in 1802. He wrote a prologue to introduce himself to the audience, and entrusted the delivery of it to Bannister. He jested freely on the subject of his own size, and professed to have been brought to town from Newcastle in "a broad-wheeled waggon."

For in a chaise the varlet ne'er could enter,
And no mail-coach on such a fare would venture.

If the public should find him deficient in the wit and humour of the part, he pledged himself to return to the North.

He then to better men will leave his sack,
And go, as ballast, in a collier back.

His Falstaff drew several excellent houses, although many of the audience may have been inclined to agree with Boaden, that "natural bulk on the stage distresses with an unlucky association of disease, and that the made-up knight is the only agreeable Sir John." Stephen Kemble was said to be a man of reading, and an actor of vigour and firmness. His voice was loud, overpowering, and deficient in modulation. "He was, perhaps, best at The Boar's Head after the robbery, though he was good also at Shrewsbury." Charles Kemble did not attempt the part of Falstaff in London until 1824, when, at

Covent Garden Theatre, he was assisted by the Hotspur of Young, the King Henry of Egerton, the Prince of Wales of Cooper, and the Lady Percy of Miss F. H. Kelly. It was said that the actor had "endeavoured to rescue the character from the coarseness with which it had usually been represented;" and that in the presence of the King, and in the conversation with Westmoreland, his Falstaff was invested with gentility and courtly bearing. Genest remarks that those who remembered the Falstaff of Henderson were not likely to be gratified by Charles Kemble's refined Falstaff. "Henderson made Falstaff neither very vulgar nor very polite; Falstaff's replies to Westmoreland are evidently familiar."

The part of Falstaff in the First Part of King Henry the Fourth was first played by George Frederick Cooke for his benefit at Covent Garden in 1802. Cooke said himself of his assumption of the three Falstaffs—and he played them each in turn—that "he never could please himself or come up to his own ideas in any of them." He remembered Henderson, accounted him the best of Falstaffs, and endeavoured, as he said, "to profit by the remembrance." Cooke's biographer, Dunlap, observes: "Whatever his own opinion was of his performance of this character, it is certain that he had no living competitor, and that those who never saw Henderson or Cooke can form no adequate idea of Falstaff." In the memoirs of Cooke mention is made of a versatile country actor, who succeeded in "doubling" the two very opposite characters of Falstaff and Hotspur.

One or two earlier Falstaffs must not be overlooked. Tom King had essayed the character at the Haymarket in 1792, with Bensley as Hotspur, and James Aikin as the King. The original representative of Lord Ogleby and Sir Peter Teazle hardly possessed the physical qualifications for such a part as Falstaff. Mrs. Pitt, a retired actress, who had played with many Falstaffs, wrote to her grandson, Thomas Dibdin: "I went the other night to see King in Falstaff; I suppose it was great, but I liked it not; he undoubtedly understood the author well; the rest was wanting; I well knew his physical inability for the character." Three years later, at Covent Garden, Fawcett first played Falstaff, and with fair success. Macready writes of him, in 1821, as "the best Falstaff then on the stage," but is careful to add, "he more excelled in other

characters." At the Haymarket, in 1803, Blissett, a comedian from Bath, represented Falstaff, with Elliston as Hotspur. On May 11th, 1826, at Drury Lane, Elliston played Falstaff for the first time, Macready appearing as Hotspur, and James Wallack as the Prince of Wales. Macready, in his *Reminiscences*, writes of the occasion: "Elliston was an actor highly distinguished by the power and versatility of his performances, but of late years he had somewhat fallen from his high estate... His rehearsal gave me very great pleasure. I watched it most earnestly, and was satisfied that in it he made the nearest approach to the joyous humour and unctuous roguery of the character that I had ever witnessed, giving me reason to entertain sanguine hopes of its great success in its performance. But, alas! whether from failure of voice, or genuine deficiency of power, the attempt fell ineffectively upon the audience, and the character was left as it has been since the days of Quin and Henderson, without an adequate representative." The play was repeated on the 15th. "Before the curtain rose," Macready continues, "I was in the green-room, and spoke with Elliston, who complained of being ill, and appeared so, smelling very strongly of ether. As the evening wore on he gave signs of extreme weakness, was frequently inaudible, and several voices from the front called to him to 'speak up.' There was not, on this occasion, even the semblance of an effort at exertion, and in the fifth act he remained silent for some little time; then, in trying to reach the side-scene, he reeled round and fell prostrate before the footlights. It was a piteous spectacle! A sad contrast to the triumph of his earlier popularity! The audience generally attributed his fall to intoxication, but without just cause. He was really indisposed, and the remedy from which he sought support was too potent. He was conveyed to his dressing-room almost insensible, and never appeared upon the stage again." Macready had personated Hotspur at Bath as early as 1814. He was again representing the character at Drury Lane in 1833. He writes in his diary: "Acted Hotspur, I scarcely knew how. I could and should have done it well if I had had rehearsal to prove myself, and a few days to think upon it. Received a severe blow on the eye and cheek in falling, which I apprehend will be a large black eye. Cooper thinks I am so furious and so strong!" Two months later he repeats

the character and notes concerning his performance: "I took more time over the opening speech, but found as I proceeded the want of study, and how very little pains would make it good. I also found in the progress of the scene the vast benefit derived from keeping vehemence and effort out of passion. It is everything for nature. The reading of the letter was not bad chiefly on that account." Other Falstaffs of distinction were Downton and Bartley. Downton was considered to be sound and judicious in the character, but without the indispensable "rolling jocund eye and the rich overflowing humour which should pour out involuntarily, constitutionally, and, as it were, in spite of itself." Bartley was playing Falstaff at Drury Lane in 1815, and long remained in possession of the character. It was as Falstaff he took leave of the stage, on the 18th December, 1852, the fiftieth anniversary of his first appearance in London. The Hotspur of 1852 was Mr. Charles Kean, and the Prince of Wales, Mr. Alfred Wigan. Bartley's farewell benefit was under the special patronage of the Queen and the Prince Consort. Criticism, however, did not accept Bartley as an actor of the first class. Mr. Cole, in his *Life of Charles Kean*, writes of Bartley, that, "although uniformly correct, judicious, hearty, and in earnest, with a perfect knowledge of the mechanism of his art, there was an appearance of labour, a want of that utter concealment of study, and of the rich unaffected colouring which marked the acknowledged masterpieces of some three or four of his predecessors and contemporaries, such as Munden, Downton, Fawcett, and William Farren."

During many years Sir John Falstaff was a very favourite character with the late Mr. Phelps, an actor who was able to obtain particular success both in tragedy and comedy. Charles Young and Edmund Kean, Macready and Charles Kean, made experiments now and then in the direction of comedy, but they refrained from attempting the fat knight. Mr. Phelps first appeared as Falstaff in 1846, during his management of Sadler's Wells, Mr. Creswick appearing as Hotspur, Mr. Marston as the Prince of Wales, and Mr. George Bennett as King Henry. In 1864, Mr. Phelps was representing Falstaff at Drury Lane, with Mr. Walter Lacy as the Prince of Wales, and Mr. Walter Montgomery as Hotspur; the King being represented now by Mr. Marston and now by Mr. Ryder.

The play was carefully represented with unusual regard for scenery and costumes; the scene with Glendower at the opening of the third act, often omitted in the acting editions of the drama, was restored, the stage was strewn with rushes in compliance with the allusion of the text; and, perhaps, for the first time since the period of Shakespeare, Lady Mortimer appeared to sing her Welsh song, the singer being Miss Edith Wynne, a lady of Welsh origin. Mr. Phelps's Falstaff was abundantly forcible and humorous if it lacked unctuousness somewhat. It was, perhaps, the Falstaff of a man who was lean by nature and only artificially fat. In his *Journal of a London Playgoer*, Professor Morley highly applauds the performance, however: "If Mr. Phelps played nothing else than Falstaff it would be remarkable; considered as one part in a singularly varied series it is unquestionably good. He lays stress not on Falstaff's sensuality, but on the lively intellect that stands for soul as well as mind in his gross body, displays his eagerness to parry and thrust, his determination to cap every other man's good saying with something better of his own, which makes him, according to the manner of the actor, thrust in with inarticulate sounds, as if to keep himself a place open for speech while he is fetching up his own flagon of wit from the farthest caverns of his stomach. And the fat knight who so familiarly cracks his jokes with the Prince or upon Bardolph is not vulgarised in Mr. Phelps's reading. When the Prince and Westmoreland meet Falstaff on the road near Coventry, and the Prince hails his old comrade with a joke, the change from the gay jesting answer to the courteous salutation of "My good Lord of Westmoreland," is marked by the actor with a smooth delicate touch that stamps the knight distinctly as a man well born and bred."

YAKOB THE FIDDLER.

A SKETCH FROM THE RUSSIAN BALTIC.

THERE was a rumour abroad that the great Rubinstein was going to give us a concert in Tukkum. How it reached us on our secluded estate, which lay some leagues from that dirty little town, I know not, but from a rumour it soon became an established fact, until the whole province of Courland rang with the news. Such an event in such an out-of-the-way spot has lashed up the whole of our tranquil, sleepy neighbourhood into a state of unparalleled

excitement. Nothing is talked of, nothing is thought of, but Rubinstein, and the days are counted and "ticked off" with infinite satisfaction, until here we are at last on the eve of the great treat, dressed in gala array, being borne through the still, sweet, golden beauty of an autumn twilight, with the mellow tinkle of Yahn the coachman's holiday-bell in our ears, meeting carriage after carriage, with more bells and more excited people, all moving in the same direction.

We scarcely exchange greetings, but "Going to hear Rubinstein?" "Ja, ja!" And on we dash past the Lettish churchyard, with its files of black crosses; they do not speak of death and the tomb this evening, but of peace and hope. In the pine-wood the spotted woodpecker pauses at his work to look at us. "Going to hear Rubinstein?" he seems to say. "Every man to his taste. I infinitely prefer a wood-louse."

So we leave him, to whirl past quiet Lettish homesteads, where half-naked, white-haired children run to hide behind the house, where storks stand solemnly on barn-tops, with the callow heads of promising families peeping out of nests. Then past baronial estates, their rambling-looking, picturesque mansions half-hidden in trees, and at length past the Jewish cemetery, looking doubly desolate and forsaken in the rich glow of the cloudless sunset. As we dash past, I catch a glimpse of the edge of a weather-stained board projecting from the shifting sandy soil, and turn from it with a shudder as I remember that the Jews bury their dead two feet deep. And ere I am aware we are in Tuklum, and our horses are shaking their heads, and pawing the ground at the door of the concert-room.

We are early, but already the room is filled. Everybody is here, from the pale, distinguished-looking Princess Lieven, in an ancient court dress, to the fat little Frau Apothekerin, in her best barège and cherry-coloured ribbons. The ladies are seated, but the gentlemen stand packed as close as herrings in a barrel in the rear. Most prominent amongst them, from the gleams which emanate from his spectacles, and the beaming contentment which lights up the good old face, stands the pastor. We wait, fanning our hot faces, what seems an age, when the door is at length opened, and the whole room looks round to see enter—not Rubinstein, but a tall, lanky young man, dressed in the blue-grey

homespun clothes and high boots of a Lettish peasant. He is shock-headed, heavy-jawed, and tanned with exposure in the fields. A pair of absent, dreamy blue eyes look out from overhanging brows. There is a restless, frightened look dawning in them now, as their owner marks the sensation he is creating. He nervously twists his cap in his brown fingers, and turns as if to retreat. There is a general titter, and lorgnettes are raised to aristocratic eyes.

The pastor pushes his way through the crowd to the young man's side.

"All right, Yakob, my lad," he says in his cheery voice, as he lays a hand on the square shoulder. "Do not go; you have paid your money and shall hear the music. See, there is a snug corner beside the stove for you."

Yakob darts a shy, grateful glance at his friend and sidles into his corner.

"What a strange idea," I hear someone say, "for a Lette to come here. Who is he, Herr pastor?"

"Who is he?" repeats the pastor with a chuckle. "A natural genius—Yakob the fiddler, people call him. It is a psychological experiment of mine. I want to try the effect of real music on this child of nature."

The conversation is cut short by the sudden entrance of the great musician. This time there is no mistake about it; everybody knows the dark, square-cut face. A burst of applause greets him as he quickly passes through the dividing crowd, and mounts the platform.

Then Rubinstein plays.

Was ever music like this? We sit spell-bound, with suspended breath, to catch every note as it rises, clear and true, from the master's fingers; the faithful echoes of an inspired soul. There is a moment's silence at its completion, the spell is still on us; then the room trembles beneath the ever renewed applause. The pastor vehemently blows his nose and wipes his eyes and spectacles in defiance of society, and I steal a look at Yakob.

He stands with his back against the stove; his blue eyes stare vacantly at the musician, his lips are apart, and his whole appearance presents a picture of utter bewilderment.

"He cannot understand it," I think. "The scrape of a beer-house fiddle is more in his line."

But Rubinstein is striking the first chords of Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata, and I forget Yakob, and the people, and

Rubinstein himself. I am away under the starlit heavens, on the lonely shore, where the moon looks down, still and beautiful. I watch the quivering arrows of light flash along the curling billows, and hear their soothing splash as they break on the glittering pebbles.

The last vibrating note dies away like a sigh of relief from a human breast.

No one moves until the pastor's stick thunders on the floor.

"Bravo, bravissimo!" he cries, and if noise is gratifying to the master, he is getting plenty of it, for we are uproarious for several minutes. He bows and smiles, and verily I believe that Rubinstein still remembers his warm reception in that poor little Russian provincial concert-room.

Now that the cessation of the music has recalled me from my all too romantic wanderings on the lone seashore, I think again of Yakob. He is still in his corner, but I cannot see his face; he keeps it covered with his large work-stained fingers, over which a shock of tawny hair hangs heavily, for his head is bowed. In all the din of applause he never stirs, for I watch him curiously, and leave him thus to lose myself anew in the dim enchanted region of sublime melody.

I do not return thence until our programme is at an end, and I am conscious of the frisky intractable legs of old Prince Lieven carrying him up the steps on to the platform. He congratulates the performer with many flourishes and old-world court manoeuvres, and asks, in French, of course, for he scorns the guttural accents of his homely mother-tongue:

"Une faveur, une très grande faveur de M^r le grand maître, Rubinstein."

It is granted, I can see, as Rubinstein turns thoughtfully to the instrument. For a minute his hands wander over the keys. The notes blend and mingle, rolling away like showers of pearls, and through the maze comes the plaintive strains of the Red Sarafan. Another stream of exquisitely blended notes, and out of it come, one after another, the songs which have sprung from the great throbbing heart of Russia. They plead and wail, and tell the listener of a thousand longings which cannot be stilled.

Instinctively I turn my eyes in the direction of Yakob. He has uncovered his eyes, and unconscious tears are coursing each other down his rough cheeks. He no longer heeds the uncongenial crowd; he is not here; and I know that

Yakob has found his way to that shadowy land of song, and is wandering the fields Elysian, whose flowers are planted by the hand of genius.

The grand tones of the Russian National Anthem burst on us like a volley of cannon, and one of the greatest treats of my life is at an end.

The rush of cool night air which meets me as I leave the heated room is grateful to my tired senses, and it is a relief to be driving into the dim, uncertain landscape on my way home. The frogs croak in the ditches as we go by; the dogs rush out to bark furiously as we pass the different homesteads; and the storks stand motionless on the barn-roofs, looking like silhouettes against the clear moonlit sky. In the wood the tall pines look like rows of dark silent sentinels, and below, out of the dark, shine myriads of glow-worms, whilst from the distance a solitary owl is hooting a hoarse good-night.

Autumn is getting ruddy and more than middle-aged. Her prime is past. Only at rare intervals she brightens up, dimpling and blushing under the returning homage of the sun, until she looks almost as fair as in those early days of full-bloom and ripe matronhood. She is putting on her best appearance to-day, and I am glad of it, for it is a wedding-day, and I am invited to the house-warming.

After a long and silent courtship, consisting of solemn and speechless lingerings together on the bench outside the kitchen-door in the summer lights and autumn twilights, Yahn, the coachman, has brought Marri, the cook, to a full comprehension of the fact that he has chosen her to be his wedded wife. How he did it I cannot for the life of me conceive, as he was never heard to address Marri at any time, but it is done, and the pastor has married them as they stood on a Turkey rug in the centre of the saloon in face of the whole establishment. I was present myself, and Marri invited me to the house-warming. At this moment husband and wife are mutely preparing the marriage-feast at their new home.

The early shadows are creeping around me as I bend my steps through the bare, shorn fields, and enter the decorated porch of the log-homestead. Already a concourse of guests are assembled, principally Lettes from the estate and neighbourhood, and the two rooms will soon be crowded to suffocation. The long tables

groan under their load—roast sucking-pigs, seethed kid, boiled rice, milk-cheese, and holiday bread. I am led to the top of a row of solemnly moving jaws, and opposite another, from whence I have a view of all that is going on. For two mortal hours the meal continues in profound silence. One pig disappears after another. The air is laden to heaviness with cheese, pig, peat-smoke, and leather. "For men may come and men may go, but they go on for ever," I think as I listen to the regular action of the insatiable jaws—champ, champ, chew, chew.

I have almost arrived at the conclusion that the Lettish peasant is provided with an extra stomach in reserve for such festive occasions, when the order is given to clear the floors. Some rise with jaws still moving, others decamp to corners to finish the interrupted meal with their plates on their knees. The tables, which are temporary constructions, consisting of boards supported by cross-beams, are speedily removed. The "kobias" (overseer) lights his long china-bowled pipe, in which he is imitated by others of the non-dancing husbandmen; the women get into corners for a gossip, and bury their noses in each other's broad cap-frills, and Umpis, the dwarf, mounts the window-seat, fiddle in hand. Umpis stands four feet two in his high-heeled jack-boots, but his every inch is important. He is regarded in the neighbourhood in the light of a great scholar; he is letter-writer to half the Lettish community; and is arbitrator, best man at weddings, musician, a crack shot, and a host of other things. He is, moreover, the baron's amanuensis and right-hand man, the plaything and play-fellow of the young folks, and the neatest, jolliest, little apple-faced mannikin that was ever born a dwarf. His twinkling grey eyes seem to shine out of narrow slits in his ruddy fat face; he darts them hither and thither as he fires off little crackling jokes amongst his admirers, chuckling to himself meanwhile as he tosses back his long yellow hair.

And the dancing begins. Yahn, who has got to the length of a broad grin though not to the use of his tongue, leads off his new acquisition; other couples follow. They stamp, whirl, snap their fingers, and finally whoop. The fiddle squeaks, groans, quavers, achieves effects before unheard by my astounded ears, and the little fiddler is bathed in perspiration; his body sways, his elbows jerk, his long yellow mane

hangs in wild disorder over his fiddle. He has long since ceased to bear any resemblance to Umpis; he is metamorphosed into a galvanised frog, and winds up standing on the window-seat, his wiry little legs far apart, his eyes closed, his face illuminated by an unctuous, self-satisfied smile, and his body thrown back.

After this we require a rest, and the fumes of Karria Yeak* rise peacefully around us. At this juncture there is a stir at the door, the men are going out and in, but this sounds like a scuffle.

"Come on, what are you afraid of? Keep hold of him, Yürri; don't let him go," I hear from different mouths, the door is pushed open, and a tall, lanky, sallow-faced, tawny-haired young man is jostled, pushed, led into our midst, and I recognise Yakob the fiddler.

"Yakob! Yakob the fiddler! Now we will have a tune," bursts from several lips.

Yakob looks shyly and sheepishly out from under his hand, which he holds to shade the light from his dazzled eyes. His nervous hand clutches the breast of his coat, under which something bulky is buttoned.

"See, he has got his fiddle with him. Come, Yakob sonnie, sit down here and play us something sweet," says a motherly-looking woman, drawing forward a chair.

"No, no; I cannot. Let him play," he replies, pulling himself away and throwing a half-sullen, half-respectful glance in the direction of the dwarf.

That mighty personage takes the word of command.

"Play—play, Yakob, and don't bean ass!"

Yakob sinks into the chair and begins slowly and reluctantly to unbutton his coat. He takes out his fiddle, lays it against his tanned cheek, and passes the bow lightly across the strings. The fiddle gives forth a strange, weird sound. In the stillness that has fallen upon us, it sounds like the wail of a little child.

Yakob starts violently, a troubled shade passes over his face, his hand drops, and he half rises to his feet.

"I cannot play; let me go," he says, with a pleading look at Umpis.

The dwarf descends from his perch and marches solemnly towards the refractory musician. He pushes him gently back into his seat, and the decisive fiat goes forth:

"You shall play, and no more nonsense. 'Lovely Minka, we must sever;' that is what you will play."

* Native tobacco.

Yakob bites his lip and looks at the ground, then with a long, indrawn breath, he once more raises his fiddle.

I notice the trembling of his hand which guides the bow. The first notes rise shaking, almost toneless, to die half-created into silence. His breast heaves, he grasps the bow more firmly in his nervous fingers, and wavering, then more and more surely, the sweet pleading of the simple song of parting steals on the enraptured ear, and finds a passage deep down into the listener's heart. It is finished, and a spell of silence is upon us which it seems a sacrilege to break. I know the grim old kobias is furtively wiping something out of the corner of his eye, and Umpis, who has sat on his perch during the performance with a critical head on one side, has turned a deep crimson. He is the first to speak:

"Good, good; very well done, Yakob! Fairly well done, my boy."

But his voice sounds muffled and strange. There is a stir and commotion amongst the women; they all talk together.

"Beautiful! beautiful! A sweet song! Oh, but he has the gift. He will play something else."

Umpis, who seems to have constituted himself master of the ceremonies, here throws the weight of his word into the midst of the exclamations.

"Yes, we must hear you again, Yakob, my friend; you can handle a bow in truth not badly, but a little uncertain. If I might advise, however, I should say first a dance and then for Yakob."

"Yes, yes, now for a dance," says a round, bright-faced damsel, and the dwarf is already screwing at his strings. In a trice I have to take flight into a corner from the whirlwind of petticoats and boots. Yakob, for the time, is forgotten; he stands against the wall, looking in bewilderment at the wild scene. His cheeks are flushed with excitement and the intoxication of praise. Presently he glances down at his fiddle which he holds in his hand, then at the door to which he cautiously steals.

And I discover that I am very weary, and gasp for the outer air. My watch tells me that the evening is far advanced, so I follow Yakob's example and slip unnoticed away. The October moon stands high in the heavens as I take my way through the silent fields. Down below me, in the valley, the mist stands like a sheeted ghost, but here, on the upland, the air is sharp and clear. I can distinctly see to count the stars on the golden rod

which rears its unbending head in my path, and mark the outline of the slowly moving figure in advance. At the gate which divides the fields he stops. I, in the rear, have reached the mountain-ash tree, whose wealth of crimson berries I had marvelled at a few hours ago. As Yakob turns his moonlit face towards me, I shrink into its shadow. He leans against the gate and seems to take into his spirit the beauty and calm peace which lie on the landscape, then he takes out his fiddle and begins to play very softly.

I cannot catch the melody at first; the strains are so low. I bend forward and listen attentively. It is something he is trying to catch and cannot. He falters, hesitates. I recognise a few broken bars of the Moonlight Sonata. Again it is vague and uncertain. He waxes more determined, the notes rise harsh and ever harsher until they suddenly terminate in a discordant squeak.

In a moment I see him dash the offending fiddle to the ground, and with a sob, half anguish, half passion, he flings himself after the instrument.

There is a deep silence, a pause which seems very long to me, for I am chilled by the keen night air, when Yakob slowly rises and gropes for his fiddle amongst the wayside weeds.

He examines it anxiously in the moonlight, then lays it once more against his cheek, and out into the still night flow, full and true, the melting strains of the Red Sarafan.

And the crazy old fiddle can tell that story. There is the soft beseeching voice of the young girl with its untold longings, the grave, pathetic tones of the mother admonishing, until the song has sighed itself out. Yakob buttons his coat over his fiddle, but as he turns to go, I catch a glimpse of his upturned face. The blessing of the calm evening seems to rest upon it, lending rapture and peace.

CHRONICLES OF ENGLISH COUNTIES.

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE. PART I.

LINCOLNSHIRE changes to Nottinghamshire with no very definite borders — flat fields and level roads, watercourses and willow-trees, with here and there a village church rising over the plain like some great ship-riding upon an ocean of verdure. We are now upon the great north road, which runs from Grantham to Newark,

and the wide, almost deserted track is chiefly noticeable for the big wayside inns, with open spaces before them as large as village greens, where sometimes a market-cart draws up, or a wandering pedestrian or bicyclist takes his cup of ale in solitary state. There are half-ruinous stables behind; no doubt, about a huge paved courtyard, where the solitary fox-hound pup—at walk, we will say, from the Vale of Belvoir pack—gambols about at his own sweet will. Perhaps a covey of partridges whirrs across the road, or a hare may spring up from the hedge-bank and run a bye all to himself. It is difficult to realise the time when you could hardly pass over this level reach of road without seeing a four-horse coach bowling along, or perhaps three or four post-chaises, while every now and then some coroneted carriage rolled proudly past, with its roof packed with luggage, and servants occupying the rumble; when this quiet inn was in full swing of traffic all day long, horses always ready-harnessed in the stables, and post-boys all in a row, with brown frocks over their scarlet jackets, with their tall boots, fended with iron, and their odd spur, all waiting for the call, like the knights in Branksome Hall.

Nor is the matter much mended when, with a roar that grows louder and louder, and an earthquake-like shaking of the ground, there rushes by, close at hand, the Great Northern express. It is here, it is gone; it is now thundering through Newark station in a cloud of dust. But it no more enlivens the country, or wakes it up, than do the rows of telegraph-wires overhead. Both, perhaps, detract a little from the appearance of tranquillity and seclusion, but the effect is only on the surface.

To reach the county we are entering now we cross a little stream by a bridge several sizes too large for it, judging from the summer aspect of the brook—it is the shire bridge, and we are in Nottinghamshire. This county is, perhaps, as little altered as any by modern innovations—a county of villages and hamlets; of pleasant swelling hills and quiet fertile dales; villages where people have dwelt since the days of the Heptarchy, without very much alteration in their circumstances; with ancient tenures and old customs still clinging about them; and something of the old English spirit—the humour, the jollity, and possibly a little of the coarseness of it—still surviving in their midst.

But already the tall graceful spire of Newark is well in sight, and soon we are rattling over the stones of its narrow streets into the wide and cheerful market-place. Cheerful, that is, on a market-day, when the open area is full of stalls and stands, where the potter has spread out his wares, and where cabbages and curly flowers (the local and poetic title for cauliflowers), and carrots and turnips, with their vivid green tops, brighten up the show. The countrywomen, with their geese and poultry, stand under the shelter of the market-hall, and there is the butchers' row, where all the prime joints are displayed. Over all rise the roof and pinnacles of the parish church, and the unrivalled tower and spire—the lower stages of the tower displaying a charming Early English arcade, adorned with the stone trellis-work that is said to show the work of Bishop Hugh, of Lincoln. Within rise the noble aisles of a later Gothic period, when spaciousness and light were the great desiderata of church-builders—when civic processions and the banners of guilds and brotherhoods mingled with the ceremonies of the Church and the emblems of its faith.

Newark, no doubt, owed its origin to its position upon the point where the great British trackway, uniting the two ancient cities of Exeter and Lincoln, touches upon the River Trent. This trackway, known along most of its course as the Fosseway, was utilised by the Romans, at any rate between Leicester and Lincoln, as a military road, and, hereabouts, near Newark, these same Romans, probably, built a bridge over the Trent; at all events there is a station marked close by, in the Roman itinerary, as Ad Pontem. Now, at the present day, although styled Newark-upon-Trent, the town is not actually upon the working bed of the river, which flows a couple of miles or so to the westward, but on an artificial cut or navigation. Still, there is abundant evidence to show that the present bed of the river is an innovation of times comparatively recent, and somewhere on the isthmus then existing between the ancient bed of the river and the creek formed by the junction of a little tributary called the Devon, stood no doubt the ancient Saxon settlement, protected by its earthen fort, the old wark or fortification. And thus things remained till after the Norman Conquest; when a bishop of Lincoln, one Alexander—warlike, as befitted his name—recognised the site as an important one, and began to build a strong castle there.

the "New wark." Probably the bishop diverted the course of the streamlet to fill the moat of his castle, and then, as in the course of some sudden flood the Trent broke its way into a different channel, threatening to leave the castle high and dry, this misfortune was averted by building a strong weir at the entrance to the new channel, so that the bulk of the river should still flow by the castle, and the New wark should still remain Newark-upon-Trent.

As a curious and yet credible witness to the accuracy of the above account, may be called the Trent salmon—a fish of tenacious memory and traditional lore. For when the fish have spawned in the upper waters, and instinct bids them seek the sea once more to recuperate their exhausted energies, they glide down the river swimmingly till they come to the junction of the waters above Newark, and then, we may imagine, there is debate. The memory of the oldest salmon is appealed to. He knows the way—the ancient way he travelled when a silvery grilse—and the big fish swim down to Newark town, where, unhappily, there is a lock which no salmon will enter. And there they stop, floundering about in the pools in a sort of piscatorial purgatory, so lean, and wan, and wicked-looking that poachers even leave them unpoached, till the next flood opens the way to the sea.

It is from the river-side, by the way, that the best view of the town is obtained, where the big corn-mills stand among a network of watercourses, and the clump of red roofs are crowned by the tall spire and hemmed in by the lofty castle wall with its flanking towers. The interior of the castle is interesting, although reduced to a mere shell, with its Norman gateway and one of Bishop Alexander's strong towers. The great curtain-wall of the castle on the river-side seems of later date, though not later than King John's time, probably. For here within these walls King John breathed his last—whether dying from poison or indigestion it is bootless now to enquire. Beneath the site of the banqueting-hall is a fine old crypt with a postern-gate leading down to the river, while in the curtain-wall above is a handsome oriel window, an insertion probably of the Tudor period, from which there is a pleasant view of the meadows beyond the river, with the great north road running straight on end, like a narrow slice cut completely out of the landscape; the road carried on arches

across the flats, to be clear of the winter floods—a great work, of the posting and coaching days, engineered by Smeaton more than a hundred years ago.

In this pleasant oriel window, looking over the river, and the mills, and the green plain of the Trent, we may conjure back the figures of the past. Wolsey stood here, no doubt, fallen from his high estate, but still a Prince Cardinal of the Church, still Primate of England—Wolsey on his way to his favourite retreat at Southwell. Here he must have stood gazing on a landscape that he saw not as he mused on the instability of princes' favour, or perhaps turned over in his subtle brain the possibilities of revenge. And then, after a long interval, comes the curled and frizzed Frenchwoman, with her artificial face—the Queen Henrietta Maria. The queen lingered here, and in her train was the handsome, courtly Charles Cavendish, soon to find a soldier's grave. It is said that the ladies of Newark were pressing in their invitations that their royal visitor should spend a longer time among them, and that the queen prettily replied that she was under her husband's orders, which she dared not disobey, while she counselled them all to pay their husbands a like obedience. At which, no doubt, the married cavaliers stroked their beards and looked magnificent, while the married women, including the queen, enjoyed a good laugh among themselves. The fiery Rupert, too, is there, with his dark saturnine face—Rupert who has routed the Parliament squadrons and sent them flying from their entrenchments—Rupert on his triumphal march towards Marston Moor.

But more familiar and germane to the place, perhaps, is one who comes immediately after Wolsey, of comparative insignificance as an historical figure, compared with the great cardinal, but of much greater importance to Newark town. This is Thomas Magnus, a homely but dignified person in his doctor's robes, one of the diplomatic agents of the king and Wolsey, who retained office and favour long after the cardinal's fall. Tradition has it that he was found as a babe on a door-step in Newark by some Yorkshire clothiers passing through with their goods, and that these gave him the name of Thomas Amang-us, because they all contributed to his support. If there is any truth in this story, the doctor's magnanimity is to be praised in respect of his benefactions to a town which gave him such a limited hospitality on his first entrance

into life. For Magnus endowed the town with free-school and charities, with revenues, amounting at the present time to upwards of two thousand a year.

Finally, to make a tremendous bound into the middle of the present century, who does not connect Newark with Mr. Gladstone? who began his political career as member for the borough, and whose portrait soon after was painted by a local artist, and presented to the Conservative club of the town.

We may now leave the castle and may wander all over the town without discovering any relics of the ancient town walls, within which a strong garrison held stoutly out for King Charles up to the last moment of the civil war. During all that time Newark and Nottingham held hostile garrisons, and, like Italian cities in the Middle Ages, they levied fierce war against each other with sallies, alarms, retreats, desperate fights, and cunning ambushes. Sometimes it was stout Sir John Byron, an ancestor of the poet, who led the broils for the king, sometimes Lord Bellasis; while Colonel Hutchinson, of the Memoirs, commanded for the Parliament; and then when King Charles was a prisoner among his faithful Scots, and all resistance was at an end, the country people were summoned from far and near to demolish castle and walls, a work which they executed with great good will—for the garrison, with its foraging parties levying contributions from all round, had long been a thorn in the side of the country.

Descending the Trent from Newark we come upon the little village of Holme, with the remains of a manor-house, where once lived the Lord Bellasis—just referred to as governor of Newark for the king—who survived to see the Restoration and another revolution, and who lies buried in the church of St. Giles-in-the-Fields, London. The church at Holme, it happens, is also dedicated to St. Giles, and is, or was not long ago, most interesting in itself, and also from its having apparently been untouched by the hand of man, except for an occasional dab of whitewash, for many centuries. Everything is absolutely just as it was left after the Reformation. The original altar-stone lies on the floor just where it was thrown; there are the original rood-screen, piscina, and sedilia; it would not surprise one to see an old mass-book in the stalls. You can trace the work of the iconoclasts in the painted-glass windows, repaired with plain glass, but the

fragments are left. Then there are monuments defaced and dust-covered, and all about is sculptured the rebus of the great benefactor of the church, a bear and tun, for Barton, who was a London woolstapler in the sixteenth century, and whose estates passed by marriage to Lord Bellasis. Observe, too, the porch with a snug little chamber over it, as is common enough in sixteenth-century churches which were built at a time when the church-porch was regarded as the centre of village life. This particular little room is known as Nan Scott's Chamber. For here in the time of the plague, which visited Nottinghamshire in 1666, and carried off a third or more of the inhabitants, an old woman, called Nan Scott, took refuge, with a store of provisions, and her bedding, which last she stowed in a big parish chest where she slept at nights. The old woman watched from a little window the funeral processions that came in constant succession to the churchyard, but when these had ceased, and she judged that no death had occurred for some time, she ventured down into the village. But there was no one left there except another old woman like herself; all the rest were dead or had fled. And old Nan Scott went back to her chamber over the porch, and never came out of it till she was carried to her grave.

Another village story of a less melancholy cast is connected with the notorious Dick Turpin. In a cottage in the village the outlaw is said frequently to have found shelter, when his usual resorts became too hot to hold him, and the story tells how on Dick's famous ride to York he here gave his mare Black Bess a cordial. There is something very convincing about this story, which also tends to corroborate the popular account of the ride. For Holme is distant barely a mile from the great north road along which Dick would certainly have passed, and yet separated from it by a broad and rapid river, which is nevertheless fordable close by—a ford that would hardly be suspected by a stranger. The village, too, is a very secluded place to this day. The story is recorded in the History of Collingham by Dr. Wake, a local antiquary of repute, who was told the particulars by a member of the family which had given Dick shelter.

From Holme a byway leads to Langford, a half-deserted village by an old marshy channel, where the cows wade knee-deep in summer-time, and which is called—as such channels usually are in this county

—the Fleet. This channel no doubt represents the ancient bed of the Trent, a ford over which gave a name to the village; and traces of ancient earthworks, on the very banks of the Fleet, point to a Roman post that protected the passage.

From Langford we strike, past Langford Hall, to the Fosseway, that here runs through great fields of barley, which go to supply the red malt-kilns of Newark town. But here the country changes a little; we have crossed the dead alluvial plain, the bed of the ancient estuary, and have reached the shore. Low sand-banks run out on to the plain, and against the sky is the roll of a sandy wold. And as we reach the top of a low hill there lies before us a bit of wild England. The sun has gone behind a cloud, a cold and chilly breeze springs up, making a hoarse murmur among the trees, and the road seems to lose itself in the forest. This is England as the Roman legionaries saw it: wild, unenclosed, with the oak scrub feathering the sides of the hills. That sparkle of light from the dark underwood you may fancy is the glint of a barbarian spear. The forest, after all, is only a clump of trees, and the barbarian turns out to be a velvet-jerkined game-keeper, while the glint of light is from the polished double-barrel upon his shoulder; but the scene brings us into accord with the associations of our next stopping-place. This is Brough, a hamlet which consists of one farmhouse and a small Wesleyan chapel standing solitary among the wide fields; it is, however, the site of a Roman station of considerable extent, judging from the foundations and lines of streets that have been turned up by the plough. Roman coins, too, abound, indeed Roman brass and copper coins seem to have been sown broadcast over all this district. In some places these coins are found in rouleaux, rusted together; and the country people called them onion-pennies; and there is a story of a giant, one Onion, to whom they belonged. It is difficult to account for this recklessness in the way of small change among the Romanised population of those days, but a likely explanation is, that the shopkeepers and traders of the Roman towns must have kept a considerable part of their capital in coins of small value; and when the Saxon invaders came, these poor creatures could only bury their treasure, too cumbersome to remove, and fly for their lives. The fugitives probably mostly perished or had no opportunity of returning, and their buried

hoards, turned up at last by plough or spade, would be scattered over the land by peasants who had a superstitious dread of anything belonging to the people they had supplanted.

If anybody really has a fancy for treasure-seeking—and there exists, no doubt, an immense deal of buried treasure lying idle, if one only knew where to look for it—this solitary village of Brough, the ancient Crocolana, would be a promising place to begin at, for, with such heaps of loose coppers on the surface, surely there must be, deeper down, sundry hoards of a more valuable metal. But the subject is too fascinating, and broadens out as we advance, so let us return to the Fosseway.

A curious circumstance is that when we get to the eastward of the Fosseway into a more breezy and open kind of country, nobody knows the road by that name. "Ye mean the Ramper," says a fine young Saxon matron, coming to her garden-gate. And capital gardens they have in these Nottinghamshire villages, with roses and hollyhocks, and all the flowers that Mary Howitt used to chronicle in verse; and capital young women too—deep-bosomed, tall and strong, fit mothers for a race of warriors—only the sons do not take to the business. But it was a pleasant experience to listen to that young matron expatiating on the Ramper. The name itself, so fresh, so racy, and the scene—the village, with its snug cottages and pleasant gardens, the village-green, the lads at play, and above the fine rolling clouds and breezy sky. The road, at the point where it crosses the borders into Lincolnshire, is appropriately named the Ramper, for here it is a raised way, a regular rampart, in fact, with projecting bays here and there, that may have been meant for defence, or perhaps as receptacles for materials for repair of the road. And this way, which is still the highway between Newark and Lincoln, has been used as such for untold centuries—a trackway of the Britons, a military road under the Romans, one of the great highways of the kingdom under Saxon and Norman laws, where the king's peace must be kept under heavier penalties than elsewhere, while no man might plough or dig a ditch within two perches of its borders.

But here we must take leave for a time of the venerable Fosseway, and visit a remote outlying corner of the county through Girtton, which is known as Grinning Girtton. This village life and village lore are the most interesting features of

Nottinghamshire, and hence it is pleasing to be told that the neighbouring villagers make it still a subject of reproach to the men of Girtton, that "the cow ate the bell-rope." The tradition is that the Girtton people were roused one night—in the civil wars, it is said—by the hoarse summons of the village bell, and that when the able men of the village had mustered on the village-green in answer to the summons of the tocsin, it was discovered that the author of the alarm was a cow which had strayed into the church, and began to champ up the hay-bands which formed the grasp of the bell-rope, that hung loosely down, country fashion. Anyhow, there is the joke against the Girtton people to this day, and an allusion to cows or bell-ropes is as likely to be badly received in that parish, as the mention of Marlow Bridge, or the pies that were eaten there, by a Thames bargee. Beyond Girtton is Clifton, north and south, the name indicating red sandstone cliffs that overhang the river, the northern village enjoying a curious franchise, as its inhabitants are free of toll on crossing the Trent by the ferry. In acknowledgment of this privilege, it, was the immemorial custom that at Christmas the ferryman and his dog should dine at the vicarage on Christmas fare, the vicar's dog being rigorously shut out of the house upon the occasion. A little to the east of Clifton lies Harby, a secluded hamlet on the very border of Lincolnshire, and quite out of the way to anywhere. But Harby is noticeable as the commencement of that royal funeral procession, whose various stages towards Westminster were marked with beautifully sculptured crosses, the last of which gave an abiding name to the village of Charing, and has been reproduced in our own day in the courtyard of Charing Cross terminus. For here at Harby died the good Queen Eleanor. Tradition long preserved a memory of the queen, vaguely and incorrectly as of a good Queen Catherine, who had lived and died there, but tradition was right in the main, while historians, for centuries, had placed the event at quite a different locality. But the critical investigation of our own days has shown the chroniclers in the wrong, and justified the oral tradition of the ploughmen and cottagers of Harby.

For in that year, A.D. 1290, King Edward came to Sherwood Forest to hunt, and summoned a Parliament to meet him at the royal palace of Olipstone, not far from Welbeck Abbey, and the queen, then

in ill-health, and suffering from a wasting fever, accompanied him as far as Harby, where she established herself in the manor-house of a knightly family named Weston, one of the members of which, it seems, was an officer of her household. Here she grew suddenly worse, and news was brought to the king, at the council-board among his nobles, that his dear wife and faithful consort was claimed by a mightier king than he. King Edward left council-board and Parliament, and rode away to the death-bed of his queen. A whole week he watched by her bedside, and then the end came. Twenty years before they had sailed together to the Holy Land, and during all that time she had always been with him. In his hunting expeditions, in his progresses, in his wars, Eleanor was always by his side. The sad, stern king took one more journey by her side. From this little village the funeral procession set out, passing through lordly Lincoln, through Grantham, Stamford, Geddington, Northampton, Stony Stratford, Woburn, Dunstable, St. Albans, and at each of these places, where the coffin rested for a night, a richly sculptured cross was afterwards raised. And all this way the king rode by the side of his dead wife, and only left the sad procession at St. Albans, where he rode on to see that all was prepared for the interment at Westminster Abbey. He met the coffin again at East Chepe among his sorrowing citizens of London, and here the spot was marked by another cross of stone. Finally the body rested at Charing Cross, and on the 17th of December was entombed in Westminster Abbey, where still may be seen the stately tomb and the effigy of the good queen.

But hie we back once more to the Trent, and following its course upwards from Newark, a pleasant walk through meadows and corn-fields with the brimming river close at hand, and the red sail of a barge perhaps seen gliding among the trees, brings us to Farndon with its picturesque little church. Here the river spreads out over a wide gravelly bed, and a ferryman plies from the opposite side. Hawton lies farther to the east a mile or two away, where, in the chancel of the church, there is a wonderful Easter sepulchre in carved stone, with other interesting relics of ancient days. And farther on is Elston, where the Darwins have long been lords of the manor, and where Erasmus Darwin was born—the author of *The Botanic Garden*, and other

courageous attempts to combine poetry and science; the progenitor of the illustrious philosopher lately deceased.

In Elston fields King Henry the Seventh lay encamped, having marched northwards from London to meet the army which supported Lambert Simnel. This army was composed chiefly of Irish under the Earl of Kildare and of German mercenaries under Swartz, whom we have met before in Lancashire, where the Simnelites landed from Ireland. Since then the rebel army had performed a long and toilsome march, to York in the first place, and then along the track of the present great north road to the Trent. Henry had marched fast, but he had not been quick enough to occupy Newark before his enemies crossed the Trent, and so he lay there at Elston between the two practicable roads that lead southwards, ready to strike on either hand. The Earl of Lincoln, who commanded for Simnel, chose the way by the river, the old Fosseway, and encamped on the side of a hill—it must have been a very small one, for it is difficult to find a hill in the neighbourhood at the present day. However, the king drew out his army in three lines, and offered battle, and the earl came down from his hill, and the armies fell to blows in the fields of Stoke which are partly enclosed within a bend of the river Trent. Perhaps it was the desperate choice of the rebel leaders to fight with their backs to a deep river where defeat must be fatal. Anyhow, their men fought with wonderful determination, and did not give way till after three hours' hard fighting when nearly all their leaders were slain. Then they began to break, and soon ran pell-mell down the lane to Fiskerton ferry, where some waded across or swam, but most were drowned or slain. Among the fugitives was Lord Lovel, who swam his horse across the river, but in urging the horse up the steep bank on the Fiskerton side, the horse fell back, and both were drowned. But some say that Lord Lovel escaped, and lived some time afterwards in hiding at his manor-house of Minster Lovel in Oxfordshire.

JENIFER.

BY ANNIE THOMAS (MRS. PENDER-CUDLIP).

CHAPTER XXVIII. A SACRIFICE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

—“Is this Captain Edgecumb rich—rich enough to be indifferent to any fluctuations of fortune on your side?” Mr. Boldero

asked, when he came up to speak, about settlements.

“I don't know. I suppose he is,” Jenifer answered indifferently; “he has a good appointment, I know. That secretaryship that we told you about, you know, gives him an income that will be more than enough for what we shall want.”

But when Mr. Boldero came to speak to the expectant bridegroom, he found that he had not to deal with the same indifference as had characterised Jenifer's manner: Captain Edgecumb was quite willing to settle the very small private fortune that would come to his share at the death of his father on Jenifer, and also quite willing to let her have a fair allowance for housekeeping out of the income from the secretaryship. But he evidently regarded this as an unimportant and merely temporary arrangement, and disgusted Mr. Boldero by saying:

“Fact is, I don't suppose I shall keep the berth long; it will tie me too much, and it will be far better that I should look after Miss Ray's interests and money matters, than that she should rely on an agent. Women always get cheated in business unless they are of a far meaner and more suspicious type than Miss Ray is, I'm happy to say.”

“True; but you'll hardly like to be dependent on your wife, will you?” Mr. Boldero asked coldly. Already he began to despise and distrust the character of the man who had taken Jenifer from him. Yet his conscience stood in the way of his interfering with her prospects, just as it had done when she had besought him to interfere with her brother Jack's for his own salvation. He could not, he dared not, be false to an oath he never ought to have taken. He could not break his vow and plead with Jenifer against her own rash trustfulness.

So the settlements were drawn up, a furnished house taken, and the wedding-day fixed.

Jenifer's first appearance at St. James's Hall was also fixed for just a month after the wedding-day.

It was not a lively wedding by any means. Jack and his wife were the only members of Jenifer's family, besides her mother, who were present at it. The Edgecumb faction were well represented, but they obviously disapproved of Mrs. Jack. Effie had made up her mind that she would not be present under any circumstances, but she really had a fair

excuse in the death of Mr. Jervoise two days before the wedding, an event which, though it had been long expected, came off at last so abruptly as to startle them all.

It was only natural that Effie should stay at home with Flora, and comfort that bereft lady by discussing with her the respective merits of the different crapes that were rolled out from various shops for her approval. But Jenifer couldn't help feeling that it was unreasonable for Effie to keep Hubert at home.

Effie, however, settled that point with the prompt decision :

"Hugh go to your wedding, just when Flora wants every consideration and respect shown to Mr. Jervoise's memory ! What a perfectly silly idea, Jenifer ; why, Flora is left enormously rich, and can do anything she likes for people who please her, and it doesn't seem to me that the same can be said of you. Unless you put your wedding off for a decent time out of regard for Flora, who has done so much for you, you'll certainly not see Hugh at it."

"It's too late to alter all the arrangements now," Jenifer replied ; "and probably if I did, some amusement would crop up by the time the wedding came off, that would interfere with Hubert's coming."

"Very likely," Effie said carelessly, "for Flora doesn't mean to shut herself up for long ; and as we shall stay on with Flora for a time, probably we shall be in the swim again soon."

Thus it came to pass that Jack and Minnie were the only representatives of the younger Rays at Jenifer's marriage ; even her father's old friend, Mr. Boldero, failed her on the occasion. There were some things which were beyond even his conscience-supported strength to endure, and one of these would have been the sight of Jenifer married to another man.

Marriage had not improved Minnie, and it had deteriorated Jack. She had not grown more refined, and he had very palpably grown much coarser. This was not a matter of much surprise, considering that the Thurtle family were now his chief associates, and that the males of the Thurtle family thought that life ought to be one long round of beer and skittles.

Old friends of the Rays had made a few spasmodic efforts to be civil to Jack Ray, and improve Mrs. Jack. But Mrs. Jack, whose richly-coloured beauty had developed since her marriage, thought herself incapable of improvement, and resented all the

well-meant, but probably weak efforts that were made. Accordingly, in spite of having married a gentleman—"the young squire," as he was commonly called—she was cast upon her own class for companionship, and was "a curious specimen," the Edgcomb thought, "of assurance and embarrassment."

"What a family poor Harry has married into !" they said among themselves. At least all but Mrs. Archibald Campbell said it. She held to the opinion that Jenifer was getting much the worst part of the bargain.

It was settled that during the very brief tour which the newly-married people were going to allow themselves, Mrs. Ray should take up her quarters in the newly-taken furnished house in St. John's Wood. This matter had been clearly arranged, and Mrs. Ray's boxes had been packed towards carrying it out.

But just as the bride was starting, maternal instinct, which had been yearning over poor deteriorated Jack all day, made Mrs. Ray say to Jenifer :

"I do feel so much inclined to give poor Jack a holiday—for the sake of doing it I'll put up with his wife, and ask them both here. I'm sure Mrs. Hatton won't mind keeping us on another fortnight."

"Why do that, mother dear, when our new house is ready, and servants taken ! Go there, of course, and ask Jack and Minnie to go and stay there with you. Dear mother, it will make me so happy to think while I'm away from you that you're being kind to Jack and Minnie," said Jenifer happily.

"I can't bear her, I confess," Mrs. Ray murmured ; "but to have my boy with me again ! Jenny dear, even you can't think what that will be to me."

Then the bridegroom—who liked punctuality on the part of other people—sent up rather a peremptory message to his wife to come down directly, or there would be confusion at the station, and Jenifer took a hurried leave, leaving the last arrangement standing good.

A shooting-box, with a splendid trout-stream running through the grounds, in County Cork, had been offered for the honeymoon by a former brother-officer of Captain Edgcomb's. This offer had been accepted by him without consulting Jenifer, who had set her heart on going to Paris for opera, and then on to the South of France watering-places for glorious—gratis—instrumental music. But she surrendered her wishes in favour of his.

"We shall go by Holyhead, I suppose?" she had said to him one day; but he laughed at the idea, and told her to look up her geography.

"Why go via Holyhead and Dublin, and then train it through the length of the country when we can just run down to Plymouth and be in Cork harbour in a few hours?"

"Only I dislike the sea," she said; but he assured her that that was all nonsense, and that she would soon learn to like it.

It did not occur to her to say anything to him about the treat her mother proposed giving Jack and his wife until they were some two hours on their journey. Then she said:

"I'm so glad dear mother will have something to occupy her mind and take her thoughts off Hubert and Effie's sad neglect of her while I'm away. She means to ask Jack and Minnie to stay with her for a fortnight."

"What?" he asked in accents of undisguised consternation.

"To ask Jack and Minnie to stay with her for a fortnight."

"Where?"

"At our house—the new house."

"At our house! Jenifer, I really am annoyed at your having been indiscreet enough to give way to any such folly on your mother's part," he said so severely that Jenifer actually shivered.

"Indiscreet to let my own mother ask my own brother and his wife to the house she is going to share with us! What indiscretion can there be in that, Harry?"

"A great deal. I'm afraid you'll soon find out; ignorant as you are of the world, you'll find it much safer to consult me on every subject. You've made a great mistake, Jenifer, that's about the truth. Jack is not at all the sort of fellow I want to have known as my wife's brother, and the woman is simply impossible. My people won't like it all."

"I think I shall always think of pleasing my mother before any of your people," she said, keeping her tears back bravely, but feeling that he was both cruel and foolish in trying to come between her and her love for her own.

"Then you'll make a mistake, and you may as well understand this at once and for ever, Jenifer. I've conceded the point of your mother living with us—that will be nuisance enough, but I'll have nothing to do with Jack; he'll want to borrow money of you. Hugh and Effie

are very well, they'll always be good form; but I must say I never felt so disgusted and ashamed in my life as when I saw that other sister-in-law of yours there among my people to-day."

"It's a pity your sense of disgust and shame didn't make you refuse to go through the ceremony," she said with a choking ball in her throat, and a heart that was throbbing with pain. Still, she kept back her tears.

"Don't let us quarrel on our wedding-day," he said more softly.

"I shall never quarrel with any one," she replied.

"Don't put me down as too insignificant for you to quarrel with," he replied, nettled into speaking sharply again.

"Would you rather I developed unexpectedly a virago-like spirit, and began to argue and wrangle, Harry? I can do neither. I can fancy no more bitter lot in life than to live in a home atmosphere in which there is no peace."

"There'll always be peace between us, dear," he said magnanimously; "only you had better consult me in future before you let the old lady invite anyone to our house. As it is, there's no great harm done. I shall send a telegram to your mother from Plymouth, telling her that I don't want the house occupied till I get home. They can all go into lodgings together if she likes, but I'll not have the freshness taken off the furniture before we have any use of it ourselves."

"As you like," Jenifer sighed.

All the glory was gone, not only from her wedding-tour, but from her married life, within three hours of its commencement.

After sending off his telegram, which made old Mrs. Ray feel more bewildered, unhappy, and of no consequence whatever, than she had felt since recovering the first shock of her husband's death, Captain Edgcomb resumed his customary good-temper and politeness.

Still, the trip across from Plymouth to Cork harbour was not a period that would for ever stand out in Jenifer's mind as one fraught with happy memories.

In the first place it became very rough as soon as they left Plymouth harbour, and by the time they were off the Longships it was blowing a fierce gale.

Jenifer was not sea-sick. People who are terrified out of their senses, when the waves and the winds are doing battle against one another with all their mighty

strength, are rarely so quick. But her nerve left her, and each time the steamer dashed like an arrow into what looked like a bottomless abyss of wild waves, or quivered up again like a living creature in agony. Mrs. Edgcomb felt a portion of her life leaving her.

"Ain't this jolly!" her husband asked, surging into the saloon, where, with her head buried in her hands, she was trying to imagine what she would feel when those desperate waves had her in a deadly embrace, and what her mother would have to live for, when the news of that drowning reached her.

"It's very awful," she answered; "it's too solemn to be spoken of as 'jolly.'"

"Nonsense! Come on deck—here, I'll hold you up—and look at the Land's End. We shall catch it to-night, and no mistake. Even the captain says we may thank our stars we are on one of the best boats on this line. Some of them roll fearfully."

At this moment a jerking lurch brought down all the glass and crockery that was on the saloon sideboard with a deafening crash, while at the same moment cries of anguish and despair rang out from the frightened women and children who were huddled in the fore-castle.

In a moment all her past life, all her hopes and fears for the future, all her disappointments in the present, flashed upon Jenifer. She knew in that hour in which she thought that she might have to face eternity at any moment, that in her over-anxiety to smooth her mother's path in her declining years she had sacrificed herself! If she had done so efficaciously there would have been no bitterness in the reflection. But as it was, Captain Edgcomb had revealed himself in his true colours to her already. He had shown himself during the few hours in which she had been his wife—this was only the day after the marriage—he had shown himself to be masterful, if not tyrannical, suspicious, and mean.

What a mistake she had made in thinking that her marriage would conduce to her mother's happiness! Why, her mother would be a cipher in the house of which he was master—even such a cipher as she had been at Moor Royal after Effie's reign had begun!

"And if I fail, and get no money of my

own, what will become of her and me!" the poor girl moaned, in a lull of a few moments. Then Captain Edgcomb came down again, declaring that, "It was glorious on deck, and that he couldn't think of letting her mope any longer."

So direfully against her will Jenifer was dragged up on deck, and made to look on the mountainous waves, and to try and stand steady on limbs that seemed to crumble away, and at the same time her husband kept on calling upon her to appreciate these convulsions and beauties of Nature that were stultifying all her faculties.

"You're very unsympathetic," he said to her complainingly, when at last, after a passage that had nearly cost her her life and reason from fright, they found themselves safely in Cork's beautiful harbour.

"Don't think me that, Harry," she pleaded.

But she hadn't strength enough, or spirit enough, to ask him in what direction he taxed her with want of sympathy, or in what way she had failed to express it.

"I've enjoyed the voyage hugely—at least I should have done if you had only shown a grain of pluck. That's what makes Hubert's wife such a charming companion in a boating or yachting excursion; she always enjoyed it, no matter whether there was half a gale blowing or a hurricane. Effie never selfishly gives way to her nerves, I'll say that of her."

"I am, sorry, you think I do selfishly," was all Jenifer could bring herself to utter. It was the first time she had had "another fellow's wife" quoted to her disparagement. In due time the probabilities were in favour of her getting accustomed to this special form of punishment.

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A Weekly Journal

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SATURDAY, DECEMBER 8, 1883.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

A DRAWN GAME.

BY BASIL.

AUTHOR OF "LOVE THE DEBT," ETC.

CHAPTER IX. ARCHIE'S LETTER.

A CURRENT of feeling, like a current of electricity, needs for its escape and relief a good conductor, or in other words a sympathetic confidant. Now the Rev. John was a non-conductor. In the first days of Mrs. John's bereavement, when he was himself shocked by it to the heart, he was sympathy itself. Even shell-lac, the most obstinate of all non-conductors in its normal state, becomes a fair conductor when fused. But, when the Rev. John returned to his normal state of dreaminess, he ceased to be, so to speak, a good conductor. Poor Mrs. John, who could really think and talk of nothing else but Archie's sufferings and his heroic silence thereabout (for the Rev. John had told her of his caution to the child not to trouble her with his troubles), was parched with thirst for sympathy, when her husband had got back to the clouds. Just then in happy time came the relief of a visit from our friend Cochin. That young gentleman having with many others been withdrawn from Gretstane College upon the exposure of the principal's severity, wrote on his return home to the Rev. John a letter marked by really fine feeling. It was full of trivial fond records of Archie's generosity and affection, and, among other instances, told simply of Archie's farewell kiss and present on the morning of his disappearance, which one of the boys lying half-awake had seen without understanding.

This letter Mrs. John read over and wept over many times a day, and answered forthwith by an urgent and loving invitation to Herbert Tandy to visit them, that she might thank him in person for all his

goodness to her boy. It must be confessed that Cochin accepted the invitation with great searchings of heart. It seemed hard to have to spend the interval between leaving one school and being sent to another in a house of woe. But his good-nature and his love for Archie prevailed and were rewarded. Mrs. John was a new experience to him. Cochin's stepmother (his own mother died in his infancy)—a young and pretty, but coarse and shrill shrew—was an abomination unto him. Therefore, as we say, Mrs. John, a lady to the very tips of the fingers, was a new experience to him, and made such an impression on his impressionable boyhood, that in after years he measured every woman by his memory of Mrs. John. In after years, also, he looked back upon these days of his visit to Chirnside as the happiest of his life. For Mrs. John even in grief, which is selfish as love, thought of herself last. Immediately upon the receipt of Cochin's acceptance of the invitation she walked over to the squire's. His wife, Mrs. Risley, patronised her own husband and a fortiori Mrs. John, but with this difference—she patronised her husband to his face, but Mrs. John behind her back. She could no more speak to Mrs. John as she spoke of her, than she could speak of her husband as she spoke to him. There was something in this gentle little woman which quelled Mrs. Risley, and kept her at a quiet distance when they were together. It may be supposed, therefore, that Mrs. John little liked asking a favour of Mrs. Risley, nor would she have asked one from her for Archie himself, if he were alive. But for Archie's friend she asked one. There was nothing she would not have done to make this boy, who had been as a brother to her child, happy. Therefore Mrs. John marched off straightway to Mrs. Risley,

told her, without giving way, of all Herbert Tandy's goodness to Archie, and even allowed her—though not without a sense of desecration—to read the sacred letter. When it had made a due impression on Mrs. Risley, who, indeed, was moved by it, Mrs. John spoke of the lad's visit to them, of the certainty of his being moped to death in their sad house, and of her hope that Mrs. Risley would ask him up to shoot, and so on, with her son and heir. Hereupon Mrs. Risley did a thing which her dearest friend would never have expected from her. She rose and kissed Mrs. John! This little woman had got as deep into her heart as anyone outside the sacred circle of her family had ever penetrated, and the patient pain in her face melted the ice already softened by the letter.

So it came about that Cochin's Chirnside days were the happiest of his life. The young squire, who was his junior by a year, took to him so extraordinarily that he would have had him spend every day and all day at the Hall; but Cochin, as a matter not of mere politeness but of preference, gave hours to Mrs. John. In these hours Mrs. John, strangely enough, extorted from him, again and again, accounts of Archie's sufferings at the hands of Kett and Skunk. In truth we believe that the little woman, who was profoundly religious, was anxious to hear these revolting details in justification or extenuation of his suicide, if that horrible suspicion were true; and that it might possibly be true she was forced to admit to herself, when she heard how ill and feverish the child had been the day before. He probably was delirious on that fatal morning. Why should he take off his coat and waistcoat merely to cross a ford? Or why should he attempt a ford, waist deep, in swift swirling water, to save half a mile? The child was certainly delirious. So she argued with herself upon the supposition of his death. But that he was not dead at all she argued with the Rev. John and Cochin, in the hope of convincing herself through them. It is astonishing how many people in this way take, so to speak, the reflections of themselves for independent witnesses. The Rev. John listened to her theory that Archie was lying ill in some workhouse, without either combating or agreeing with it, though he wrote for her satisfaction to the masters of all the workhouses within a radius of twenty miles of Duxhaven.

Now Cochin, to please her, would

run to meet the post each morning that she might have her letters a minute or two sooner, and be put by that space out of the pain of suspense. So it came about that the lad was at last the happy bearer of Archie's letter.

He tore madly back to the house, into the dining-room, drawing-room, study, and then headlong upstairs to her room, utterly disregarding the Rev. John, who, seeing him dart in and out of the study like a hunted creature, had a dim idea that he had gone mad. Mrs. John, when she heard the boy shouting, "Mrs. Pybus," in a frenzied voice as he flew up the stairs, knew it was news of Archie. She hurried out of her room, met him in the passage, and heard him gasp, "Pete! Pete!" in a voice of intense excitement, as he thrust the letter into her hands. She leaned dizzy and bewildered against the room door, the blood rushed in a spring-tide to her head, and next moment, as in a neap-tide, rushed back, leaving her white and cold as marble. She stared at the envelope, but could not see the well-known hand, or realise the news it told, for a mist was before her eyes and her mind. Cochin was shocked at his inconsiderateness and its effects, and called out for the Rev. John, who, hurrying up, helped Mrs. John to her room.

An hour later Mrs. John came down and kissed Cochin in the fulness of her great joy, and handed him Archie's letter to read. It was quite a long letter, the work of hours, written at intervals as his strength permitted, in a very large, round, tremulous, and uncertain hand.

"4, Locomotive Terrace, Horseheaton.

"DEAR MOTHER,—I have run away from school. I couldn't help it. I fell down on the line and the driver stopped his engine, and took me up on his engine. His wife's name is Liz. She is so kind. She sits up every night with me. The doctor says I shall soon be quite well. The doctor says I should have died only for Liz. Liz wants you to come. Do come, dear mother. I shall go back to school if you like; but Liz says you won't send me back when you know what kind of place it is. Liz says you will not be angry with me when you hear the place it is, but I can't tell you all about it in a letter. Dear mother, do come. Liz says I have been a long time ill, but I don't remember. If you can't come soon, do write when you get this. The man took all your letters, the man who took my coat, and waistcoat,

and boots. They were my best boots. Liz says she is sure you will come when you get this. She says when I tell you what kind of place it is you will not send me back. Uncle told me not to tell you about it, but Liz says he did not know what kind of place it is. She says when I tell you what kind of place it is, you will not send me back again. Liz says you are sure to come when you get this. I hope you will come when you get this. Liz sends her respects. She says she thinks you will be here to-morrow.—Your affectionate son,

"ARCHIE."

Here was a tremendous letter for a child, and a sick child, to write; but Archie yearned so for his mother, that the day's work—and it was a whole day's work—was a labour of love to him. When he heard that it couldn't go before night, he appeased his impatience by adding to it now and again as his strength allowed; and when he could think of nothing more to say, he wrote the address in a vast hand at the top of the letter, and Mrs. John's address with greater pains and in smaller letters on the envelope, the two performances taking up the last half-hour. His illness had left him much more a child in mind and body than it had found him.

Mrs. John, when she handed Cochin the letter, was dressed for her journey, though she had not yet thrown her things together, for she had spent much of the hour on her knees. Now, however, the amazed Martha was sent to pack such things as she herself thought right, for Mrs. John could do nothing but oscillate between the hall-door to look out for the cab and the study to re-read the letter and wonder to her husband about Archie's illness, what it was, if he were out of danger, and whether Dr. Grice could spare the time to go and see him.

Dr. Grice answered for himself. Calling at that moment he was told the news, shown the letter, and volunteered to accompany Mrs. John. He was now a busy man, and locally a great man, but there was no patient he would not offend for Mrs. John's sake. Protesting that he had hardly a name on his note-book for that day, he carried off Mrs. John straight-way in his carriage.

Thus, in five hours from the receipt of the letter, Mrs. John held Archie in her arms, while Dr. Grice, leaving them together, sought out the local doctor, to explain and apologise for his intrusion. Dr. Grice was so widely known that the

local doctor was highly flattered by being associated with him in a consultation, and the two set out together for Mrs. Schofield's.

Their verdict was that the child was well out of danger, but not so far as to make it safe to move him—a very acceptable verdict to Liz, who was still more gratified to hear Dr. Grice say to Mrs. Pybus:

"It's been touch and go, Mrs. John, and but for the nursing it would have been 'go'—eh, doctor?"

"The most devoted and indefatigable nurse, Mrs. Pybus, I assure you," pronounced Dr. Steele in his grandest manner. "Mrs. Schofield has nursed the child night and day till she has so worn herself down as to need to be nursed herself."

Mrs. John—must we confess it?—felt an acute pang of jealousy of Mrs. Schofield shoot through her heart. But she so mastered it that next moment she took the good woman's hand in both her own, and thanked her with sincere tears.

Mrs. Schofield was also jealous and also wept, for uppermost in her mind was the thought of losing the child.

Of this, however, there was no immediate fear. Nor did Archie take a final leave of these Good Samaritans, when he was at last well enough to be moved. Not a year of his boyhood passed without his spending a week or two with Ben, to whom he went to school for the study of engine-driving in all its branches—an art, the mastery of which was one day to stand him in good stead. Horseheaton was the depôt of the railway company which turns out the finest locomotives in England: the factory, hospital, and stable of its engines, and, therefore, the paradise of a child like Archie, who thought engine-driving the summit of human happiness and glory. When there, he was always on the foot-plate, not, indeed, of Ben's engine—for Ben was too good a driver, and had too good a character to lose, to take the lad often on his giant express—but on that of some pilot or shunting engine. Then he would always meet Ben at the station, and was often permitted to run the express into the shed. Here he would ask Ben such a host of intelligent questions as amazed and delighted that enthusiastic driver. He thought the boy the most brilliant genius because of the progress he made in Ben's own beloved science.

"There's yon lad," he would say reproachfully to his fireman, who indeed was a mere machine; "there's yon lad, he's

nobbut a child, and has had no eddication, as a body may say, no reg'lar eddication, and he knows more abaast an engine nor thee, that's been fitter and fireman a matter of nine year or better. He fair caps* me he does. Allus at schooil with niver no chance of larnin' owt that is owt, wi' nobbut a week or two in t' year to pick up a bit of knowledge, an' yet he beats thee, aw tell thee, all to nowt. He'll mak more steam aat of a paand of coil than thee aat of a ton."

Not a literal allusion to Archie's actual proficiency as a fireman, but a metaphorical one to his making so much of such scant opportunities. And, indeed, Archie in his sixteenth year had become such a master of the noble art that Ben would rather have trusted him than his fireman to keep the "gas," as he called it, at an even pressure, up hill or down dale, stopping, starting, firing, feeding, for a run of one hundred miles. It was Ben's ideal to see the needle of the pressure-gauge stick at one hundred and forty pounds from start to finish.

But to return to Mrs. John.

The full tide of her joy on the recovery of Archie having subsided a little, left bare the ugly anxiety—how to keep him. For a moment she entertained the idea of concealing his resurrection from Mr. Tuck and the world, but not even her love and fears for Archie could reconcile her to the falsehood and injustice of such a deceit. This plan having been put aside in the moment of its conception, she thought next of writing to Mr. Tuck a letter apologetic, pitiful, appealing, begging to be allowed to adopt the child. Such a letter, had she written it, would probably have succeeded. Mr. Tuck would, no doubt, on first thoughts have been moved by its pitiful and apologetic tone to bluster back a peremptory refusal of a favour; but, on second thoughts, he would probably have been more influenced by the prospect of being rid of the child for ever, and of all the expense, responsibility, and disgrace attaching to him. For he felt keenly the disgrace of the exposure in the papers.

However, Dr. Grice wouldn't hear of this idea.

"If you write so," he said in his decisive way, "he'll be certain you want the boy for something you can make out of him, and he'll suspect you of some scheme of extortion or other. A fellow like that, who has no heart himself, thinks that a

heart is a hypocritical name for a gizzard for grinding what grist you can get hold of. Besides, he's an old woman, and I needn't tell *you*, Mrs. John, that whining and wheedling is the worst way to make an old woman do what you want. You must go to work in a businesslike way. You must first make Mr. Pybus write him a formal letter, curt without being discourteous, announcing merely that his nephew has been found, that he is recovering slowly from a fever, accelerated and aggravated by his treatment at Gretstane College, and that he is not yet in a fit state to be moved. Then it's ten to one he'll write back a blustering letter like his last, washing his hands of the boy, or threatening to send him to a reformatory, or some other hysterical rubbish. Then, if you affect to be frightened into an offer to adopt the boy, he'll be proud and pleased to think he has trapped you into a bad bargain."

A suggestion of the doctor's was a law to Mrs. John. Such a letter as he advised was sent, and answered almost in the very words he suggested. Even the reformatory was mentioned in it. Mr. Tuck's answer, however, to the proposal of adoption was not so precisely according to the doctor's programme. It neither gave nor withheld consent to the proposal, but ignoring it altogether, simply disclaimed henceforth all responsibility, pecuniary or other, in connection with the boy, and concluded with the insolent menace that attempts at extortion would be referred to his solicitor.

In truth, Mr. Tuck forgot prudence in his rage at Archie's resurrection—a rage made more furious by a motive to be disclosed presently. Within an hour after his receipt of the Pybus proposal to adopt the child, his answer was posted; for weak people take haste—one of the feeblest forms of weakness—for strength. Hardly, however, was the letter posted, than Mr. Tuck regretted a precipitancy which was certain to cast back the boy on his hands; and not until a fortnight had passed without the expected retraction of his proposal from the Rev. John, did Mr. Tuck lose his terror of the post.

Thus Mr. Tuck had the best reasons in the world for persuading himself and others of his nephew's infamy; for if there had been nothing disgraceful in Archie's conduct, there must have been a good deal in that of Mr. Tuck. Besides, we have the united authority of Tacitus, Seneca, Dryden,

* "Caps"—i.e. surprises.

and George Herbert for the maxim, "The offender never pardons." Weak men, it is true, are not usually implacable or strong in hate any more than in love; but, on the other hand, no man is so zealous in his religion, and in the persecution of its blasphemers, as he who makes a god of himself; and Mr. Tuck was a fanatic of this faith. Now religious people are always most implacable towards those who suggest doubts on doctrines of which these believers themselves are not absolutely assured. At bottom it is not so much the assault on religion, as the assault on their own peace of mind, which they resent. It was this feeling which made Mr. Tuck loathe the mere mention of Archie's name, as the suggestion of a doubt upon a weak point in his faith.

KING HENRY THE FOURTH, PART THE SECOND.

As an acting play the Second Part of King Henry the Fourth has enjoyed much less of popularity than was accorded to the First Part. Sequels are apt to suffer from lack of freshness; the absence of Hotspur is much felt in the second drama, and Falstaff reappears with some decrease of his original force and effectiveness. The presence of Shallow is a great gain; but there is loss of action, and interest, and of novelty of characterisation; the tone of the later play is less chivalrous than contemplative. The Second Part was first published in 1600, in quarto, the title-page describing the work as "The Second Part of Henrie the Fourth, continuing to his death, and coronation of Henrie the Fifth, with the humours of Sir John Falstaffe and swaggering Pistol; as it hath been sundrie times publicly acted by the Right Honourable the Lord Chamberlaine his servants." The version of the play in the first folio, or the collected edition of the plays published in 1623, is supposed to have been printed not from the quarto, but from a transcript of the original manuscript; it contains passages of considerable length, some of these being accounted among the finest in the play, which are not to be found in the quarto. The editors of the Cambridge Shakespeare hold that, while the folio affords occasional readings which seem preferable to those of the quarto, the quarto is, nevertheless, to be regarded as having the higher critical value.

William Kemp, the original Dogberry, is supposed to have been also the original

representative of Justice Shallow, but no evidence on the subject is now forthcoming. In the quarto edition of the play, at the beginning of the fourth scene of the fifth act, occurs the stage direction: "Enter Sincklo and three or four officers." Sincklo, or Sincklowe, was an inferior member of the company, whose name occurs also in the Third Part of King Henry the Sixth, and in the Induction to *The Taming of the Shrew*; he performed very small parts, and could have ranked as little higher than a supernumerary. His is the only name, however, that has come down to us in connection with the first cast of the play. In the second scene of the first act the word "old" appears prefixed to one of Falstaff's locutions, and Steevens suggested that "old" might be the first syllable of the name of the actor who originally assumed the character. Theobald was more correct, probably, in his supposition that Falstaff was originally called Oldcastle, and that "the play being printed from the stage-manuscript, Oldcastle had all along been altered into Falstaff, except in this single place by an oversight; of which the printers not being aware continued these initial traces of the original name." Sir John Oldcastle had been much about the person of Prince Hal, and had on many accounts made himself extremely hateful to the clergy, who availed themselves of every opportunity therefore to encourage representations holding him up to scorn and ridicule. "I am convinced," writes Davies, "that Oldcastle was made the jack-pudding in all the common interludes of public exhibition; he was a liar, a glutton, a profane swearer, and a coward; in short, anything that might render him odious to the common people." It is believed that Shakespeare, in compliance with this view of Oldcastle, assigned his name to the fat knight. But with the Reformation came a great change in the general estimation of Oldcastle. The Protestants claimed him as a proto-martyr in their cause; it was by no means Shakespeare's desire to offend any of his public; he took pains forthwith to substitute the name of Falstaff for that of Oldcastle. That there might be no mistake in the matter, he required the speaker of his epilogue to state, after promising to continue the story with Sir John in it and make the spectators merry with fair Katharine of France, when Falstaff should "die of a sweat," if already he was not killed with their hard opinion, that "Oldcastle died a martyr, and this is not

the man." It will be remembered that in the First Part of the play, the Prince addresses Falstaff as, "My old lad of the castle." It was also by an oversight, probably, that this expression, already pointing to the name the fat knight had originally borne, was suffered to remain in the text.

Whatever success the Second Part may have enjoyed in Shakespeare's time, and for some years afterwards, there is no trace of its speedy revival upon the re-opening of the theatre at the Restoration. It seems, indeed, that it did not reappear upon the stage until early in the reign of Queen Anne. In 1720, at Drury Lane, the play was presented, the bills announcing that it had not been performed for seventeen years. It was described as "written by Shakespeare and revised by Betterton." Early in the eighteenth century, no doubt, Betterton had appeared as the Falstaff both of the First and Second Parts; but the Falstaff of 1720 was Mills; Booth appearing as the King; Wilks as the Prince; Cibber as Shallow; Theophilus Cibber as the Duke of Clarence; Norris as Pistol; the popular comedian, Joe Miller, as Silence; and Pinkethman, charged also with the delivery of the epilogue in character, as Feeble, the woman's tailor. In favour of Betterton's edition of the play there is not much to be said. He wholly omits the scene at Warkworth before Northumberland's castle in the first and second acts, the opening scene of the third act, and the first and fourth scenes of the fifth act. The Earl of Northumberland is excised from the list of dramatis personæ. Falstaff is rebuked, but is not committed to the Fleet Prison by the Lord Chief Justice. To the fifth act is tacked on the first act, in an abridged form, of King Henry the Fifth, with the scene at Southampton in the second act of the same play. In 1731 the play was again presented at Drury Lane, when Mills appeared as the King. Resigning the part of Falstaff to Harper, the younger Mills personated the Prince of Wales. Boman appeared as the Lord Chief Justice. Shallow was still represented by Cibber, whose son, Theophilus, now played Pistol for the first time; and the comedian Oates "doubled" the characters of Poins and Feeble. It is evident that this was still Betterton's acting edition of the play, for the Archbishop of Canterbury appears in the list of the dramatis personæ, and the Archbishop, in strictness, pertains to the first act of King Henry the Fifth, and has no place

in the Second Part of King Henry the Fourth.

Davies, in his *Miscellanæ*, relates that after the old actor Doggett had ceased to be concerned in the direction of Drury Lane, Booth, Wilks, and Cibber, as managers, assigned to the comedian Johnson, by way of exhibiting their particular respect for him, the more important of the characters Doggett had been accustomed to sustain. Among these was Justice Shallow. Johnson falling ill, however, Cibber, who had been casting longing eyes upon the part, took possession of it, and so gratified his public by his manner of representing it that he retained possession of it so long as he remained upon the stage. Cibber, with, perhaps, some affectation of modesty, professed to be in many of his characters but the imitator of the players by whom they had previously been represented. His Justice Shallow may, therefore, have been simply a close copy of Doggett's performance of the part. It is certain, however, as Davies states, that no audience was ever more fixed in deep attention at his first appearance, or more shaken with laughter in the progress of the scene, than at Colley Cibber's exhibition of this ridiculous justice of the peace. . . . "Surely no actor or audience was better pleased with each other. His manner was so perfectly simple, his look so vacant, when he questioned his cousin Silence about the price of ewes, and lamented in the same breath, with silly surprise, the death of Old Double, that it will be impossible for any surviving spectator not to smile at the remembrance of it. His want of ideas occasions Shallow to repeat almost everything he says. Cibber's transition from asking the price of bullocks to trite but grave reflections on mortality, was so natural, and attended with such an unmeaning roll of his small pig's eyes, accompanied with an important utterance of tick! tick! tick! not much louder than the balance of a watch's pendulum, that I question if any actor was ever superior in the conception or expression of such solemn insignificancy." After the retirement of Cibber, the veteran Johnson was permitted an opportunity of resuming his old part, and although he was now between seventy and eighty, something of his former force and skill remained to him. "Though the old hound had lost almost all his teeth," writes a critic, "he was still so staunch that he seized his game and held it fast." Of Cibber, it is reported, Johnson

never spoke with complacency. Probably the old actor held that for nearly twenty years the unfair action of the management had deprived him of one of his best parts. Theophilus Cibber had been instructed by his father how to represent Ancient Pistol. Cibber took "unusual pains with the young man," we are told. No actor ever gained so much applause in the part, says Davies. "He assumed a peculiar kind of false spirit and uncommon blustering, with such turgid action and long unmeasurable strides, that it was impossible not to laugh at so extravagant a figure, with such loud and grotesque vociferation. He became so famous for his action in this part that he acquired the name of Pistol, at first as a mark rather of merit, but finally as a term of ridicule." In his *Historical Register* for 1736, Fielding caricatures both the Cibbers, bringing them upon the stage, the father as Ground-Dog, the poet, and the son as Pistol. Hogarth caricatured Theophilus Cibber with others of the comedians who revolted from the patentees of Drury Lane in 1733, and a burlesque of the actor was presented at that date at Covent Garden Theatre in the anonymous "tragi-comi-farcical ballad opera" of *The Stage Mutineers*; or, a Playhouse to be Let, his personator being Aston, a son of the more famous Aston, who wrote a *Brief Supplement to Cibber's Apology*. The elderly actor, Boman, the contemporary of Betterton, rendered importance, it was said, to the character of the Chief Justice, maintaining "the serious deportment of the judge with the graceful ease of the gentleman." Davies pronounced that all the actors of his time who had been allotted the part of the King and the Prince had been "fortunate in engaging the attention and raising the affections of their auditors." Booth as the King, and Wilks as the Prince, were both "highly accomplished, and understood dignity and grace of action and deportment, with all the tender passions of the heart, in a superior degree." Mills and Milward, who succeeded to the part of the King, were both competent actors, the latter being especially skilled in the exhibition of pathos. "His countenance was finely expressive of grief, and the plaintive tones of his voice were admirably adapted to the languor of a dying person and to the speech of an offended yet affectionate parent." The younger Mills, who imitated the manner of Wilks in playing the Prince, though by no means equal to his exemplar, was held to be above mediocrity.

In 1736, at Drury Lane, on the occasion of his benefit, Quin appeared as Falstaff in the Second Part, when certain of the scenes omitted by Betterton were restored to the stage, and Quin delivered a prologue, said to have been written by Betterton when he first revived the play. It was probably an adapted version of the prologue written by Dryden for his arrangement of *Troilus and Cressida*, and delivered by Betterton upon the first performance of that work in 1769. In 1738, the Drury Lane audience had an opportunity of seeing the First and Second Parts performed upon successive nights. Quin and Mills, the younger, were the Falstaff and Prince of both plays; but Milward, the Hotspur of the First Part, was the King of the Second. The comedians Johnson and Joe Miller were now the carriers, and now Shallow and Silence. Apparently, Betterton's version was not employed upon this occasion, but the original text was preferred. The Archbishop of Canterbury is not included in the cast. The Second Part was reproduced in 1749, when Delane played the King and Ryan the Prince of Wales; and again in 1758, for the benefit of Woodward, who attempted the part of Falstaff, Garrick for the first time appearing as the King, with Palmer as the Prince, and Yates as Shallow. In personating King Henry, "Garrick's figure did not assist him," as Davies writes; "but the forcible expression of his countenance and his energy of utterance made ample amends for defect of person. To describe the anguish, mixed with terror, which he seemed to feel when he cast up his eyes to heaven and pronounced the words, 'How I came by the crown, O God, forgive me!' would call for the pencil of a Raphael or a Reynolds." Yates was found to give great pleasure as Shallow, without being so absolutely just in the delineation of the part as his predecessor Johnson.

The production of the Second Part at Covent Garden, in 1760, with Shuter as Falstaff, seems to have owed its success chiefly to a grand pageant which followed the play, and which represented the coronation of King George the Third in Westminster Abbey. The play obtained twenty-two performances, other of Shakespeare's plays, King John, Henry the Fifth, and Richard the Third, being also adorned with the supplementary spectacle of the coronation, and enjoying many representations and special favour on that account. At Drury Lane, forty years

later, the promising young actor, Powell, played the King, Holland appearing as the Prince of Wales, and Tom King as Pistol. Davies writes of this performance: "Though Garrick, from a mean jealousy, a passion which constantly preyed on his mind, denied to Powell the merit of understanding the pathos of the famous scene with the Prince, the audience thought far otherwise, and by their tears and applause justified the action of that very pleasing tragedian." A performance of the play at Covent Garden in 1773, for the benefit of Mrs. Lessingham, an admired actress of that period, was chiefly remarkable for the fact that the lady, "by desire," as the play-bills said, assumed the character of the Prince of Wales to the King of an anonymous gentleman, his first appearance upon any stage. Shuter was the Falstaff, and Woodward the Justice Shallow for that night only. The next Falstaff in the Second Part was Henderson, a very famous Falstaff. This was at Drury Lane in 1777, where Bensley played the King, Palmer reappeared as the Prince, the Pistol was Baddeley, and the Silence Parsons, who at a later date assumed the part of Shallow, "with that happy mirth and glee which is sure to captivate an audience," notes Davies, and he asks, "Who can be grave when Parsons either looks or speaks?"

At Covent Garden in 1804, the Second Part was represented by a very strong company; "the play was particularly well acted," commented Genest, who presumably was present upon the occasion. George Frederick Cooke appeared for the first time as Falstaff in this play. There had been some delay in producing the work because of the indisposition, or in other words the intoxication of Cooke; but, as his biographer records, he played the part at last with a brilliancy as an actor, which almost made us forget the clouds which obscured the man." John and Charles Kemble personated the King and the Prince; Munden was the Shallow, Blanchard the Pistol; Emery appeared as Silence, Henry Siddons as the Earl of Westmoreland, Murray as the Chief Justice, and Mrs. Davenport as Mrs. Quickly. Macready notes that Kemble as the King produced but little effect in the play; owing to his being "too ill," he was only "partially and imperfectly heard." Macready was of course only repeating what he learnt from critics who were present upon the occasion. It was in 1821

at Covent Garden that Macready was first called upon to assume the character. He had begged hard to be excused from appearing in it; he doubted the possibility of his succeeding when Garrick and Kemble had comparatively failed; moreover, the coronation of Henry the Fifth in the last act was to be represented with special splendour relatively to the coronation of George the Fourth, then about to be accomplished, and the actor feared that the audience would be so eager for the pageant with which the play was to close, that they would pay little heed to the play itself. But his objections were disregarded, and he resolved to do his best with the part. "It was necessary," he wrote, "to support the cast with the whole strength of the company, and I could not be left out of the leading tragic part. To every line in it I gave the most deliberate attention, and felt the full power of its pathos. The audience hung intently on every word, and two distinct rounds of applause followed the close of the soliloquy on sleep, as I sank down upon the couch. The same tribute was evoked by the line, 'Thy wish was father, Harry, to that thought!' which, I may say, was uttered directly from the heart. The admission of the perfect success of the performance was without dissent, and it was after being present at one of its representations that Lord Carlisle wished me to be introduced to him. He had seen and remembered Garrick in the part, and said very kind things of me in reference to it." At this time Fawcett appeared as Falstaff, Charles Kemble as the Prince, Blanchard as Pistol, Farren as Shallow, Emery as Silence, and Mrs. Davenport as Mrs. Quickly. The revival of the play rewarded the managers with crowded houses for many nights; "nor was this," Macready writes, "attributable to the pageant only: the acting was of the highest order."

Macready's signal success in the scene closing the fourth act of the Second Part, led to his occasionally presenting that portion of the play in a detached form; an unwise proceeding, quite apart from the injury done to Shakespeare, for it lent justification to Mr. Bunn's application that the tragedian would appear in three acts only of King Richard the Third, presented as an afterpiece. A desperate quarrel and a violent assault by the actor upon the manager followed, with an action in the Sheriff's Court, which gave Mr. Bunn one hundred and fifty pounds damages for the

injuries inflicted upon him. Macready acted in "the dying scene," as it is called, of the Second Part in 1843, for the benefit of the Siddons Memorial Fund; in 1845, at the Opera Comique, Paris, for the benefit of the Society for the Relief of Distressed Authors; in 1850, at Bristol, playing Lord Townley afterwards upon the occasion of his farewell benefit in that city. For Mrs. Warner's benefit, during her tenancy of the Marylebone Theatre, he also gave King Henry's dying scene, the lady appearing for that night only as the Prince of Wales. It was Macready's early success as King Henry that led to his being portrayed in that character by Jackson. The picture was originally included in the collection formed by Charles Mathews, the elder of that name, and now possessed by the Garrick Club.

The Second Part was, of course, one of Mr. Phelps's revivals at Sadler's Wells. The part of Falstaff was assigned to Mr. Barrett, an able comedian, for many years a member of the company, and Mr. Phelps with peculiar success "doubled" the characters of the King and Justice Shallow. The actor's Shallow was indeed counted among the best of his more comic and eccentric impersonations. In 1876, at the Queen's Theatre in Long Acre, a version of King Henry the Fifth was produced prefaced by the closing passages of the Second Part, including the death of Henry the Fourth and the pageant of the coronation of Henry the Fifth. Upon this occasion Mr. Phelps appeared as King Henry the Fourth. No portion of the Second Part has since been seen upon the stage.

DRAWN BLANK.

THE passionate grief beside the dying bed;
The passionate longing for the vanished bliss;
The passionate yearning for the glory fled;
Of each we ask: "Can life bear worse than this?"
Aye—answer weary lips and tired eyes,
To violent sorrows, solace Nature grants;
Worse than the world's supremest agonies,
Are all its empty blanks—its hopeless wants.
When vivid lightnings flame and thunders crash,
When the fierce winds lash the fierce sea to storm,
We see the beacons by the lurid flash,
The tossing spray-clouds glittering rainbows form;
But when below the sullen drip of rain,
The waters sob along the hollow shore,
'Tis hard to think the sun can shine again,
The dull waves gleam to living light once more.
When time saps slowly strength and hope away,
And the black gulf yawns by the lonely path,
When the dumb night creeps on the empty day,
And the one clue of all is held by death;
Look not to faded joy or lingering love,
To wake the powers youth and faith had given,
Take patiently the lot we all must prove,
Till the great bar swings back and shows us,
Heaven.

ALONG DOCKSIDE.

"A STIFF nor'-wester's blowing, Bill. Hark! don't you hear it roar now?" as the old song hath it, only it happens to be a south-wester in this case, which is much nicer for us unhappy folk on shore, there being no icy touches about it suggestive of lumbago and bronchitis, but, instead, a soft but blustering freshness; and in the roar of it we may fancy we hear the voice of the great foaming waves that have raced with the gale all across the Atlantic, waves that are now dashing and springing sky-high against the rugged cliffs, while the gale, with a howl of derision, dashes on; to whirl away the scanty dead leaves in our back gardens, and whisk people's hats off at street-corners, and to roar about the roofs of railway-stations, and to frighten sailors' wives as they lie in bed and think of shipwrecks and lee-shores at each volley of the wind, and fancy each bang and buffet upon swinging door and rattling casement a signal of distress from the wild and wasteful ocean.

Our neighbour, the skipper's wife, has been free till now from these apprehensions; for why? the skipper is safe at home, and has been for this fortnight past, while his big steamer the Rajpootana is lying safe in dock discharging, and then taking in her cargo; a time of fête for all the skipper's household, which goes off every night almost in four-wheeled cabs to the theatre, and rejoices in unlimited pocket-money. But all these joys must come to an end at last, for the Rajpootana is on the list to sail to-day, and sail she will, whether the wind blow high or low.

Now although ours is not a seafaring neighbourhood, no, nor even a riverside district, while its notions of harbours and docks are confined to a limited acquaintance with Paddington Basin, yet still we are interested in a general way in the shifts of the wind and the scrapes of the boisterous weather. Only the talk is of monsoons and hurricanes, of trade winds and typhoons; for hereabouts is that nearer India which is not mentioned by geographers old or new, but which lies somewhere between the Campden hills and the jungles of Shepherd's Bush. There is our neighbour round the corner, for instance, in Delhi Square, whose back garden, as Bunyan would say, butts down upon ours; the neighbour with the grizzled moustache, and highly baked complexion, which is beginning to grow paler and paler

under the amenities of English life; he is known to us as the major—but he is not a soldierly major, but a magistrate, a commissioner for something or other in the lands beyond the Indian mount. Well, our major, who has become quite a fixture in the neighbourhood, and the fragrance of whose cheroot, wafted over intervening back walls, has come to be a familiar fragrance, is missed all of a sudden from his accustomed hill. Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he; but is discovered betimes this morning, hovering between his front door and a cab loaded with luggage. Bills are in the window announcing the house to let, and the furniture-vans are in waiting, to convey the major's household goods to some distant repository. All is ready for a start, all but the major's wife, who stands in the doorway, her shawls and wraps fluttering wildly in the wind, while she points tragically to the stormy sky. "I'm not going to start in this dreadful storm," she cries. "It is only a land breeze, my dear," says the major soothingly. He has burnt his boats and broken down his bridges, and is likely to forfeit heavily in passage-money unless he can get his wife along. "You know when it blows on shore, it's pretty sure to be calm at sea." The major's arguments prevail at last; he hands his wife into the cab, and they drive away.

The skipper is also on the move, casting an eye to windward as he reaches the garden-gate; but he starts on foot, with a small leathern case in one hand, and on the other side his wife, a little buxom woman, who has kept him waiting for a moment to give some last directions to the trim maid-servant at the door, while a windowful of curly-headed children upstairs are drumming on the panes and shouting incoherent farewells. And so they start off together as if they were going for a morning walk, although, as far as the skipper is concerned, thousands of miles of stormy sea lie between him and his return to his own garden-gate. And the skipper is as careful of the little case he carries as if it were his familiar fetish—being, no doubt, his chronometer, or his sextant, or his artificial horizon—anyhow, some of those amusing instruments with which seamen spy out their way—a talisman, indeed, to bring him safely back to the garden-gate, and the buxom little wife, and the curly-headed children.

As it happens we all meet at Addison Road Station—a sort of free city in the

way of railway-stations, with no absolute over-lord to domineer over passengers—a terminus where nothing terminates, and where loose ends of line from all parts of the kingdom are gathered together. The porter loudly hails us to take our seats for Manchester, Liverpool, and the north, but although Liverpool has a strongly-attractive sea-going flavour about it, and we can fancy the fresh blustering scene on the Mersey, with the big steamers at their moorings, and the little tenders with their passengers bobbing up and down, yet we are not so far afield for to-day. People sometimes forget that there is a Port of London—a port extending along the busy tideway from Gravesend to London Bridge, that can yet hold its own against—aye, and even score a point or two beyond—your boasted Liverpool, or any other of the great ports of the world. A port, however, that in the process of holding its own seems likely sometimes to part company with London altogether, as its big docks extend farther and farther down the river, but that London grapples to it again with long arms in the way of busy streets, while Ratcliffe Highway may be said to have packed itself on a tram-car, and gone off to Plaistow Marshes, and if it means to catch the seaman who sails foreign, will have to follow him soon even to Tilbury, and perhaps farther still.

But at the present time our ultimate, in the way of sea-going London, is to be reached at the Albert Docks, although how we should be going there by way of Hampstead Heath and Kentish Town is puzzling to one who does not carry a railway-map of London neatly delineated on his brain. But we have got the skipper on board, and the major, too, and by following their lead we shall surely be landed safely at the docks. In its way a voyage round London is a pleasant and even exciting experience, with the glimpses it opens out of busy settlements encroaching on green fields, and their varied populations moving about the railway platforms: the shy maidens of Hampstead, each with a Mudie's volume on her lap; the wide-awake daughters of Camden Town, who scramble for their seats with the firm intention of not being left behind in the struggle for existence; the swarm of City men at Dalston Junction, who take the Broad Street trains by storm; and then a different strain of existence altogether as we start afresh, still keeping in the wake of the skipper and the major, through Hackney, and above its red-tiled

roofs, where steady prosperity verges on the boundaries of squalid poverty; and then Homerton, whose old-fashioned country church peers out with a lost and mazed appearance from among the freshly run-up houses. Soon a sudden bend to the southward brings us among the masts of ships in the midst of smoke and smother, and here the passengers are seafaring if you like. Bluff men burst into the carriages as if they were rushing up the shrouds. They hail their friends in the adjoining compartments as if they had met on the high seas, and were making their voices heard over the stormy waves. Here your mattress and bolster are common articles of personal luggage, and great sea-chests are slung about as though so many hand-boxes. And the hats, too! The youths we have just seen rushing citywards would consider themselves lost and degraded youths if their hat brims and crowns varied a hair's-breadth from the established form, but as you get dockwards you see a strange assortment of head-gear: the soft felt (the favourite variety), the loafing-looking cap of the labourer, the Eastern fez, the Chinaman's cap, the plantation straw of the darkie, and, noticeable among the rest, a collection of stove-pipe hats quite new-looking, and with their primitive gloss upon them, and yet of shapes quite out of vogue for long years. These belong to skippers, stewards, and others, who, faring forth into foreign lands, leave their best hats in the custody of wives at home, and so these hats are brought out at intervals, of years, perhaps, and with care will last a lifetime. About the stations, too, instead of the coloured incitements to purchase Roper's cornflour, or Croper's mustard, we have equally highly-coloured placards recommending Foper's anti-corrosive for ship's bottoms, and other specialties of that nature, while replacing the announcements of excursions to Herne Bay or Southend, we have enticing offers of passage at lowest fares to such attractive places as Padang, Samarang, Sourabaya, and Macassar. And then instead of the ordinary passenger-trains you expect to see, short squat little trains come by, that shake the very ground, with trucks of a battered, travel-stained aspect that may have thundered along, shaking the ground as they went, from the extreme end of Cornwall or the farthest confines of Northumbria.

And then, as we are simply bound for the docks, without any distinct purpose beyond getting to the said docks, we are

likely to be considerably puzzled at the choice of stations that is offered us, all of which are docks, but docks with a difference —altogether half-a-dozen or so; but the skipper, who is our guide, books for Galleons, which has a spicy and romantic sound, recalling treasure-ships and the Spanish main, and buccaneers who robbed the Don and hid his treasures in lonely islands up and down, as in the stirring times of Morgan and Dampier. In sober fact, Galleons is no station to speak of, and everybody darts away across the line and in front of the engine; all but the skipper and the major and their respective wives, who are not to be disposed of in that summary manner. Now, all through the land passage our skipper has been the most submissive of mates; his wife has taken the tickets, has piloted him across the junctions, has wrapped him up carefully when the wind was chilly, and eased off his wraps when the sun shone out a little. But once among the masts and funnels our skipper shows himself a new man. He is a chieftain now, and we his humble vassals.

Our major is not so confident; there is a certain feeling of uneasiness in his mind, for our particular dock is about two miles long from end to end, with the funnels and masts of steamers peering over the two-mile line of iron sheds. In such a crowd of shipping, how shall he put his hand upon his own particular packet? The major's notion is that his wife shall sit upon the baggage while he looks for the ship, but then there are not many women who would patiently submit to such an ingloriously passive rôle, and the major's wife least of all. It is all the major's ridiculous parsimony, for the sake of saving a pound or so in cab-hire, that has landed them in this dilemma. Meantime half-a-dozen dock-porters, who, like vultures, have scented their prey from afar, are bearing down upon the pile of baggage. "Take your boxes, colonel," cries the leader of the band, "what's your ship—the Rajpootana? Oh, I knows her; come along, mates." And the boxes are already mounted upon legs and moving away, when an official makes his appearance. "Now then, you put them boxes down. You're for the Rajpootana, ain't you, sir? Well, all them things will be fetched." "Oh, why didn't you say so before?" cried the major's wife, while the boxes on legs stopped, and began to stagger vaguely about. "Put them down, do you hear?" reiterated the official, whereupon the boxes came down with a crash, and the

legs arranged themselves in line supporting a series of outstretched palms, all directed towards the major, who had lit another cheroot, and calmly reviewed the squad. "You engaged us, colonel. Shilling apiece, that's our doo," is the general chorus. "Yes, a regular do it is," rejoined the major, while the wife ejaculated: "There's your boasted economy, Frederick." However, the major compromises all claims for half-a-crown, and was able to show a gain of seventeen-and-six in favour of railway travelling.

As we are sure of our bearings by this time, and have identified the Rajpootana's funnel exactly opposite us beyond the line of sheds, we adjourn to the tall Queen Anne building, that rears itself high above the surrounding waste, and in large letters announces itself as The Galleons Hotel and Refreshment-room. Here is a capital attempt to alleviate the dreariness of embarkation—a roosting-place for birds of passage, a house of call for the higher class of mariners, and a temporary home for those who have taken leave of all their friends, and severed the last ties with England, and may here snooze to the last moment before their ship hauls out of dock, free from unpleasant misgivings of not being called in time, or of a cab mutiny at the very last moment. For here things go by tide rather than by time. At dead low water all slumber and sleep, but at the flood, when the brimming river is swirling in at the dock-gates, and the big steamers, with their rusted storm-battered sides, are crowding in, while other big steamers, trim and taut as paint and polish can make them, are waiting to run out, then our Galleons is awake and astir, whatever may be the hour of day or night. The stout skippers will be calling for their boots, the first officers singing out for hot water, while mother-familias demands supplies of bread-and-milk for the little brood of ducklings she is about to lead across the great pond.

After all, our major's description of the south-westerly gale as a land-breeze is rather borne out by facts, for down here at the docks there is no wind to speak of; the gale has died away—or rather, perhaps, slunk off to await our voyagers in the Chops of the Channel. And now there is a gleam of sunshine over the bright watery green of the marshes, while the pleasant hills of Kent are looming in the distance through a mingled web of mist and sunshine. And truly it needs a little touch of light and colour to relieve the dun and doubtful

aspect of those long rows of iron sheds that run on in unbroken line till they are lost in the murky distance. But when we have crossed the line, and fairly come into dock-land, a nearer view is more inspiring, for the quays that run between these rigid iron sheds and the equally rigid walls of the big iron steamers that lie alongside, stem and stern, as far as the eye can reach, these broad quays are full of life and animation. Here are the fiery engines that come spurting along the criss-cross network of lines, with their warning shriek—shrieking to people to get out of the way; the railway waggons whirled hither and thither; an army of labourers charging about with hand-trucks and barrows; an army, too, of great hydraulic cranes that stand there in long rows, with their huge, far-reaching arms and great circular counterweights, like some nightmare dream of huge monsters born of mechanic force, which, as they twist and turn, and haul huge bales out of deep cavernous holds, and deposit them as gently as a mother puts down her child, and exert such superhuman strength with such noiseless ease, and all at the bidding of some invisible operator within, seem certainly endowed with life and intelligence. Don Quixote would have charged them at once as pestilent compounds of giant and enchanter, and any one of them would have whipped up the knight and his horse, armour and all, and dropped them softly into the hold of the nearest ship, without taking any more notice of the encounter.

And if there is bustle and confusion on shore, there is a trifle more on board—anyhow for those big ships that have got the blue-peter flying at the fore. There is the Rajpootana now just ready for sea; the little Louisa tug waiting to haul her off into the river when all the big ropes and chains shall be cast off one by one, and the huge inert mass shall wake up into strenuous life and effort. Here are first and second officers in the very height of frenzy; shippers waylay them, clerks and merchants, as the last load of cargo is swinging high in the air, and men are frantically rushing on board with passengers' heavy luggage. "We can't do it," shouts the perspiring first officer. "We've got Calcutta and Rangoon on the top of you." And here comes the captain from the custom-house with his papers. It is all frenzy—frenzy, and the tide waits for no man.

In curious contrast with all this energy

and fervour is to be noticed a certain inanimate object that is waiting its turn to be fetched on board. This is a reposeful but rather battered Japanese lounging-chair, that is labelled as the property of Major-General Sir Hercules Humblestone, K.C.B. That old armchair, it is easy to guess, will be regarded with some perhaps not altogether affectionate veneration on the voyage. Coolies will give it a wide berth, and sailors will abstain from dragging ropes across it as the general lounges there in his pith hat and white jean suit. It makes one shiver to think of it just now, with the chill wind whistling along the quay; but these happy folk who are bound for the East will pick up springtime in the Mediterranean and glowing summer in the Indian Seas. Well, the general's chair is hoisted on board, and that seems to be the last straw that completes the load. The hydraulic crane strikes work, and turns itself edgeways with a gurgle as of fatigue and satisfaction. In a few moments the Rajpootana's berth will be empty and waiting her successor. "But there is just time for one cup at parting," suggests the major—for a hasty visit to the cuddy, where two or three seasoned hands are quietly enjoying their tiffin amid all the bustle. There is a fragrance of curry and chutnee, and the servants who run about have dark faces and white turbans. An Indian prince brings our sherry with a profound salaam. Happy people you who are about to be wafted from this mud fog imbroglio to lands of warmth and sunshine! Well, the major admits that it is not a bad prospect if they were once across the Bay of Biscay, and if they had not that insufferable Sir Hercules on board, who is sure to make it uncomfortable for everybody.

But the bell rings for visitors to clear out, the skipper is on the bridge, and the engineers at their posts. There is just time to get on shore and then to scamper off to the pier-head to see the steamer pass out into the broad tideway, where the little Louisa casts her off and leaves her to her own devices. And so, with a thundering blast or two from the steam-pipe, and a scattered cheer from friends on shore, while the skipper waves farewell from the bridge and the major from the poop, away goes the Rajpootana, and is soon lost to sight among the crowd of sails and funnels.

Returning to the dock quay the same busy traffic is going on. There is a New Zealand steamer off by this tide, and

another steamer for Australia, but they will hardly be missed in this long street of steamers. There is a spicy, Eastern perfume in the air, something between camphor and sandal-wood, and a subtle fragrance from the myriad chests of tea—Chinese tea as well as Indian, for these outlying docks are now getting a good share of the tea trade. One thing hangs upon another, and just as Tenterden Steeple is accountable for Goodwin Sands, so the Suez Canal is responsible for the Albert Docks and for those that are being made still farther down the river. For the long weight-carrying iron screws, that are built to run through the canal, are not adapted for the turns and windings of Father Thames in the higher reaches, and so after the fashion of Mahomet, the docks now are sliding down the river to the ships, instead of the ships coming up to the docks. And this expensive process of dock construction is a necessity if London is to hold its own in the trade with the East, for which the canny Scots about the Clyde are quite ready to make a bid, and which Liverpool is ready to welcome to its magnificent tideway.

Hitherto London holds its own easily enough as the great central emporium of the world. Up its river, every year, six thousand steamers of an aggregate of four million tons burden, come in regular succession, irrespective of wind or weather, while five thousand sailing-vessels, of two millions of tons burden, come in flocks as favourable winds permit. Against this Liverpool can only show two thousand eight hundred steamers, and some two thousand four hundred sailing-ships. In both cases, but in London more rapidly than in Liverpool, the steamers are gaining upon and ousting the sailing-ships, a process just as natural and inevitable as the replacement of the hand-loom by the power-loom. The grand, fast-sailing tea-clippers, for instance, are soon to be things of the past, replaced by the iron monsters of screw-steamers, and the importance of this tea-trade to the Port of London may be judged from the fact that, of two hundred and seven million pounds of tea imported annually into this country, all but a scanty pinch of some fifty-five thousand pounds comes into the Port of London, and is landed there. Not that quite all this tea is taken into consumption, for forty-four million pounds are shipped again, and exported to foreign parts.

Hence it is that so much of the throng

and bustle of sea-going London seems concentrated about these Albert Docks. What jute, what bales of wool, what countless chests of tea, which industrious young men are busily counting nevertheless, and marking down on tally-sheets, as the hydraulic monsters draw them forth in batches and deposit them on the quay! Here are bales, too, from Dunedin, marked "First winter rabbit-skins;" no wonder the wandering cadger, with his or her plaintive cry, "Hare-skins and rabbit-skins!" is crowded out of existence. And what strange metamorphosis will they undergo, these rabbit-skins, before they appear on the shoulders of youth and beauty as fox or sable, or what not! Then to match the skins are the carcasses—their little bodies come in cans, their little skins in bales—great cases full of tinned rabbits, which are swung over our heads. And while the wool comes in one ship, the sheep are found in another, flocks of frozen sheep that show their stiff outstretched limbs for a moment and are then hurried away. There is a mystery about these sheep, which are sent aliding off along great shoots, and finally disappear into some dim mysterious region below, to reappear, perhaps, in Smithfield Market as prime Southdown at fourteen pence a pound.

It is a fair morning's walk from Albert to Victoria Docks, but these last are much quieter and more humdrum in their ways, neither do they afford such a pleasant promenade, for instead of a long unbroken line of quays, here we have a series of jetties, and big steamers on either hand that are quietly unloading and loading, more of the former than the latter, for it is wonderful to notice how much more in quantity and value comes into the country than ever goes out of it. Indeed, this growing gap between what we get and what we give is expanding so rapidly that it is becoming one of the most disquieting and unaccountable signs of the times. If we import four hundred millions worth of things, and only export two hundred millions odd, either we are making a tremendous profit, or running very deeply into debt. There is another way of accounting for part of the discrepancy by supposing a tremendous hole in the customs ready-reckoner, and that as the declaration of value, in the case of both imports and exports, is a perfunctory matter, which does not in any way affect the duties paid in this country, while there are heavy ad valorem duties awaiting English goods in nearly every foreign country, it is just

possible that our exports, to be taxed abroad according to value, are writ smaller, and our imports, not taxed on that principle at all—with the solitary exception of essence of spruce, which cannot be an affair of millions—may be writ larger than just occasion warrants. But, with every allowance for facts and figures being not altogether in accord, the decline of our export trade is a nasty, uncomfortable fact, which strikes a note of alarm in the midst of all this apparent prosperity.

But this is not a matter that can be worked out along dockside, where as we advance the cargoes become of a less diversified and interesting kind. There is not much pleasure to be got out of guano, for instance, and even grain has a certain sameness about it, whether in bags or in bulk. But between guano, and grain, and seeds, the boards that line the quays show a fine promise of spring corn in every crack and cranny.

Arrived at this point, indeed, the street is more interesting than the dock, the prolonged Ratcliffe Highway a regular highway of nations. Lounging along, not much occupied with anything before them—and indeed the great cities of the world must seem curiously alike to those who rarely get beyond the purlieus of dock or harbour—but gazing listlessly at what is going on, advance the seafaring men of all nations. Here is Sindbad the Sailor in his snowy turban, and there the forty thieves who hail from Singapore. Coolies troop about in queer parti-coloured garments, with red caps, and white and blue, in tunics, chogas, and old pilot-jackets, with pointed Chinese shoes, or sandals of straw, or the common English highlow, as may happen. Here is an old negro with a face like a truffle so scarred and seamed and honeycombed, with a costume built up, it seems, of red pocket-handkerchiefs. You may wrap yourself in silk, cotton, or rice-matting here, anything will go down along dockside. Even the little English children who swarm as much here as elsewhere, even these have lost the faculty of wonder, and are not to be excited by the most outlandish figures.

All along the dock road the thoroughfare is extending itself, a new town of no great depth—for the green marshes of Plaistow are to be seen at the openings of streets—but a regular seaman's highway, where are collected the things he most delights in. There are public-houses, music-halls, coffee-houses, lodging-houses—all more wholesome and cleanly-looking

than similar establishments in Shadwell or Wapping. There are comfortable-looking tenements, too, with neat blinds and curtains, all with cards in every window, "Apartments," where skippers and ships-officers may find lodgings to their mind. The docks have their own churches and chapels, their reading-rooms and refreshment-rooms; but the sailor, like the soldier, generally prefers a taste of outside life to any kind of semi-official entertainment.

And when sated with the humours of dockside, we jump into a train and are jolted past a station or two—Custom House, where there is no such place to be seen, unless a trumpery shed be that custom-house, and Tidal Basin, which is about the solidest bit of inland scenery we have met with—and then to Canning Town, with a little smoke-stained wooden station curiously perched over the line. And here we alight, bent on going through London rather than round it again. For here, to the initiated, opens out a cunning track, first over the river Lea, with its bottomless mud-banks, a dismal gulf of despair—a sad ending for a river that has had its gleams of beauty and brightness in early life—and then coasting the dock-wall, slipping by a postern-gate into the East India Dock Basin—not right into the basin, be it understood, but along the quay. And here the African steamers make a very respectable show; and farther on are the Australian clippers—almost the last remains of the beautiful sea-going ships of old-times; emigrant-ships that are to sail with despatch, but doubtfully as to a week or two, all things going on in a leisurely way—sailors heave-hoing at a chain-cable. But somehow the heave-ho has not the old swing and spirit in it. Those fizzing and whirring things that go by steam and lug up your anchor with the turning of a tap, seem to have taken the life out of the sailors' song. A long farewell to the beautiful white-winged ship, with its bellying sails, now in sunshine, now in shadow, its rich apparel of fairy-like tracery of rope and rigging, its stately progress, its life-like movement over the waters! Farewell, too, to the old salt who is bound up in the life of his ship! A little while, and the full-rigged ship will have vanished from the seas, and to the coming generation, which will see them only in prints and pictures, they will appear as strange as the galleys of old times. Among the clippers, a huge

shark-like steamer has thrust its wicked-looking nose—the Victory. It is victory indeed!

Now, at the very entrance to the East India Dock Basin is Blackwall Pier, and following the progress of a ship that is being lugged and tugged into the river—two big tugs pulling at her and one little one pushing behind—we find ourselves once more upon the familiar pontoons, and looking over the Thames in its fullest tide, and with all its argosies in full sail. Great is the press of barges, bumping and butting their way along, helpless, yet aggressive. Long strings of them, too, are hurried away behind little struggling tugs, the sea-going steamers hooting and whistling, the nimble river-boats threading their way dexterously through the throng—over all a windy, watery sky, with sunbeams struggling out. And then the bell invites us—the signal-bell from the station hard-by, that signifies "Train in"—and we hurry for the train as if our life depended on catching it, although another quarter of an hour might not have been ill-spent among the loafers on the pier and the loungers along dockside.

MOUHOT, THE EXPLORER.

THE French have sometimes an unpleasant way of doing things. Not only as individuals, but as a nation, they now and then forget their traditional politeness and lapse into brusquerie. And, when once they are tête-montés, they are apt to go from bad to worse, until there comes a regular explosion, after which they cool down. From our point of view they have been very offhand of late. One can hardly believe that to the same nation whose guards at Fontenoy so courteously begged ours to fire first, whose rank and file in the Peninsular War fraternised so pleasantly with the redcoats whom they had been fighting the day before, and would, perhaps, have to fight the day after, can belong the men who treated Mr. Shaw with such gratuitous indignity. Their conduct in Tonquin, too, seems, from our point of view, almost as bad as their behaviour in Madagascar. I say from our point of view; for nations, like individuals, have a way of condoning their own misdeeds, and it is well to remember that we also have been far too high-handed in our dealings with Orientals. Read Lord Strangford's book on our shortcomings in this respect, and you will feel

sure we ought not to throw stones, we, who have gone on taking what we chose out of the whole world until there is really very little left for other nations. If I were a Frenchman, I should be very indignant at the tone of our press about New Guinea. "Why should not we annex Guinea?" a Frenchman might ask. "We had got a fair footing in an infinitely better island, New Zealand; and you gave us the slip, and, while one of your captains was entertaining our officers at dinner, you seized it all in your Queen's name. We didn't protest. Louis Philippe wasn't great at protesting. The mean-spirited creature couldn't rise to the idea of a grand colonial empire. He preferred filling his money-bags, and cheating and wheedling about his wretched Spanish marriages. But all the best of us felt it, nevertheless. It was quite a trick of perfide Albion. You did the very same thing at Perim not long after, and we felt that it was unfair in both places. Why should you have everything and we nothing? You have Australia—a world in itself; you would have left us New Zealand if you had had the slightest generosity of character. And now that we are thinking of the only island left us, the very undesirable and unhealthy Papua, you cry out and set your Australian colonists to roar, and tell us we're afraid to do anything in Europe, and that's why we are getting so restless in the out-of-the-way corners of the world." That is how Frenchmen think. I, who write this, have heard them talk, and it is well to reflect that everybody's views are not exactly like our own.

It is much the same about the Tonquin affair. We see in it nothing but French violence, French aggressiveness, French bullying insolence. To the French, on the contrary, the attempt to get a footing on the south-western Chinese frontier seems noble and praiseworthy. All their savans for the last thirty years have been looking in that direction. They remember that in America, France was the great pioneer of discovery, that it was her missionary-explorers who made their way across from the St. Lawrence to the Mississippi, and then followed that great river to its mouth, a feat of which the name Louisiana preserves the record. They have long wished that this age should rival the glory which the subsequent loss of Canada had tarnished; that the Me-kong, the water-way to Yunan, should become, if possible, a French river, or if not, that Frenchmen

should be the first to tap that great Chinese province of Yunan on the southern side.

We, too, have been long looking in that way. Mr. Margary fell a victim to his zeal in pushing on into the forbidden ground. But the French, with their base of operations at Saigon, seemed more directly called to the work; and their way of answering the call has resulted in their present difficulty with China.

It is not merely conquest for conquest's sake. The educated Frenchmen, who, in opposition to the mob, are anxious to extend their territory, really believe that to do this is the only way of giving anything like prosperity to that south-eastern corner of Asia. This was long ago the opinion of Henri Mouhot, one of the most single-minded men who ever lived. He, meditating among the splendid ruins of Ongcor Wat in Cambodia—ruins which he first made known to the world, asks, "What has become of the civilisation that reared these magnificent palaces and temples of early Buddhism?" And his answer is: "War, continuous and desolating war, brought in by Siamese and Annamite neighbours, ruined the Khmers or Cambodians, and reduced those of them who were not carried away captive to the state of wanderers in the recesses of their great forests." And he can see no remedy save in conquest by some European power. This power he thinks will be France, who, having taken Saigon, was on the way to possess herself of Cochin China; but he hopes she will choose (what he hints she has not always done) good governors, whose wise rule will be a contrast to the unbearable spoliation and extortion of kings and mandarins. Thus, you see, France has a moral aim in annexing Tonquin. Mouhot was not the man to give false reports. A Huguenot of Montbéliard, he was of such an upright nature that the French Catholic missionaries were all tenderly attached to him; and his testimony is unvarying. "The king tries to get all the produce," whether it be of gold and precious stones, or of a trifle like cardamum, "into his own hands." Over and over again he deplores the state of the millions "bowing shamefully under a servile yoke, made viler by the most barbarous customs," and hopes that, when some European power does come, it will come not "as the blind instrument of ambition to add to their present miseries." What had happened at Saigon did not reassure him. He sadly contrasts the self-

glorifying bulletins of the French admiral with the widespread report of the misconduct of the troops, how they burned the market, ill-treated the women, and generally misbehaved themselves. He tries to believe it was all done by the native allies, and trusts the French soldier will henceforth act by himself, so that his true nobility of character may be seen. It seems to him so sad that these people who are prepared to see white men acting like angels, should find that they can behave like demons. Mouhot had seen in Russia a good deal of the evils of despotism. He lived there from 1844 till the breaking out of the Crimean war, teaching Greek and natural history in several academies, and perfecting himself in photography, then a new art invented by Daguerre. He scrupulously kept aloof from politics—he was a savant, and it must be (he felt) a very hard task to govern so vast a country; but he was touched to the heart with what he saw, and when he got home he wrote a novel called *Slavery in Russia*; but in Siam he found things even worse; “the whole of society,” he says, “is in a state of prostration.” The abject crouching before superiors just typifies the state of the national mind.

Not long after he left Russia, Mouhot, with his brother, came to England. They had both married English ladies, relations of Mungo Park. But in 1858 Henri came across an English book on Siam; the innate love of travel laid hold of him; and, by the help of our Geographical and Zoological Societies, he was able to carry out his plan. For four years he was travelling, chiefly among forests where the sun could scarcely shine. During the rains he was in a constant vapour-bath, the slightest movement throwing him into a profuse sweat. Sometimes provisions were not to be had. Once he lived for weeks on salt fish, washed down with very bad water. Yet his health was excellent, thanks, he thought, to his total abstinence from spirits, and to a very sparing use of wine. He died of jungle-fever, however, “a martyr to science,” said the newspapers of the day. He was on his way to the borders of Yunan, worried, as travellers thereabouts always are, with difficulties from head-quarters, strict orders having been sent from Louang Prabang to prevent his going farther. He had started for Louang Prabang to demand explanations, when the fever laid hold on him. His two faithful servants kept urging him to write to his family, but

he delayed, replying always: “Wait, wait; are you afraid?” and making short entries in his journal. During the final delirium he talked a great deal in English, of which his servants understood nothing. His servants carried his collections of insects, shells, etc.—one had been lost in the wreck of the *Sir James Brooke*—and his drawings and MSS., to the French consul at Bangkok. A big beetle was named after him *Mouhotia gloriosa*; several land-shells also preserve the name of their discoverer; but his chief title to fame is his discovery of the ruins of Battambang and old Ongcor. Ruins he found everywhere—pagodas, towers, palaces; but these two are on so vast a scale that they took the scientific world by surprise. Mouhot claims for them an antiquity of two thousand years. They go back, he thinks, to the dispersion of Buddhism in India some centuries before the Christian era. It is a pity he could not take photographs, but his drawings show masses of building, with central and entrance towers, far more elaborate than what in Southern India are called dagobahs and goparums. The domes on these towers are built in a series of rings growing smaller and smaller, sometimes with a tendency to become bulbous, as if anticipating the common form of Saracenic dome which has spread over Europe as far west as Vienna. Long cloisters, with arched roofs, built in the fashion of a nave and aisles, join the gateways and outlying towers with the central mass. The bas-reliefs describe all kinds of subjects—horse-races, cock-fights, military processions; heaven, into which the good, all plump and well-favoured, are entering in palanquins, with their fans, their umbrellas, and even their betel-boxes; hell, where the victims are all skin and bone, the rueful expression of their faces being irresistibly comic, and where they are being pounded in mortars, sawn in sunder, roasted on spits, devoured by fabulous monsters, impaled on elephants’ tusks or rhinoceros horns. But the chief subject is the story of the Ramayana—the combat of the king of the apes (typifying some aboriginal race which sided with the Aryan invaders of India) with the king of the demons (the hostile black race). The few details which Mouhot gives have that strange likeness to Mexican sculptures which one sometimes notices in early Indian work. People, I suppose, in the same stage of culture, work much on the same lines everywhere. No need to assume, as some

have done, an early race of which the chief seat was some now submerged continent, and of which the builders of Mexican and Egyptian pyramids, of Easter Island colossi, and of Hindoo cave-temples and Cambodian palaces, were outlying fragments. Certainly the sculptured faces are neither Malay nor Chinese of the modern type. I say this because—as everyone who has seen much old china is aware—the ancient Chinese face was far less Tartar, less snub-nosed, than that to which we are accustomed. It came much nearer the Cambodian face as given in these ruins. Among the statues; of which Mouhot found many, both in bronze and stone; the finest was the so-called figure of “the leprous king,” the traditional builder of the whole. He is naked, squatting in Eastern fashion, the head full of dignity, with very regular features of a peculiar type, only found now (says our traveller) among the mountaineers on the Annam border. The whole place is full of carving—lions on the staircases; huge idols, many of them still objects of pilgrimage; grim giants in chain-mail like those which guard the portals of modern Siamese pagodas—all perishing, as the incomparable sculptures and wood-carvings at Nikko, in Japan, are perishing.

Even the granite, of which all the upper part is built—the basement being ferruginous sandstone—though every stone is shaped so carefully that no mortar is needed, is beginning to decay. “Some of it crumbles like rotten wood.” One asks, “Why all these buildings so close together?” for Ongcor Thôm (the great) is only about three miles from Ongcor Wat (the old). The former contains a whole town, with moat and double wall. Galleries with porticos and vaulted roofs, all one mass of delicate sculpture, run from every entrance. The place has been deserted for ages; a few Cambodians, who live in a hamlet outside, grow a little rice among the ruins. There is a bridge of fourteen arches, now as useless as the rest, for the river has taken another course. The temple at Ongcor Thôm is called “hide-and-seek playing pagoda,” because the galleries connecting its thirty-seven towers so cross and recross as to make it very hard to find one’s way. One tradition is, that a smaller pagoda, called “temple of the angels,” was a celebrated school of Buddhist theology. Another story is, that ropes were stretched from tower to tower, on which danced native Blondins for the delectation of the king as he sat on one of the terraces. But properly there is

no tradition, these are only stories invented partly to account for work attributed sometimes to the “leprous king,” sometimes to giants, sometimes to the “king of the angels.” One man whom Mouhot questioned answered, like Topsy in Uncle Tom’s Cabin: “It made itself.”

What a contrast between these grand temple-palaces and those of Siamese princes nowadays! Inside especially, a modern Siamese palace falls short of expectation. What with old glass bottles, looking-glasses, slippers, sofas, washstands piled up on tables, it looks more like a broker’s shop than the abode of royalty.

The present people are a mixed race. Annamites have come in as conquerors, so have Siamese, so have Chinamen. The latter largely outnumber the natives. Indeed, to find a pure blood Cambodian, you must go far into the mountain forests, or to one of the villages of exiles, descendants of those whom the invaders carried off. Lazy they are, says Mouhot, because the more they produce the heavier are the taxes; dirty, because their abject poverty gives them no heart to be clean; soft-natured—they call a tiger “grandfather,” and humbly beg its pardon when they are trying to kill it; and if they kill an elephant, they hold a feast to propitiate its soul, offering rice, and spirits, and betel, of which, and of the flesh of the elephant, the whole village partakes. The Catholic missionaries, who must be amongst the most devoted even of that self-denying body, think that one of the forest tribes must be Jews, left, of course, by Solomon’s shipmen, for everybody knows that hereabouts was Aurea Chersonesus, that golden peninsula which, in my boyish days, was thought to be Ophir. This tribe practises circumcision, abstains from pork, and is said to sacrifice a red heifer. The first usage proves nothing, for Australians and many other savages do the same.

The unpleasantest of all these people are the Annamites, so impassive (says Mouhot) that after ten years’ absence a son won’t kiss his parents—fancy what a Frenchman, who kisses his bearded friend when he is going a short railway journey, must think of that—and such stubborn idolaters that Father Cordier, whom Mouhot found dying, with no regret but that he could not see his parents once again, confessed there had been very little answer in the way of conversions to all his preaching. The Siamese, even in Mouhot’s day, were spoiling themselves with European dress. How

infinitely less graceful the two wives of the second king, with flowers and furbelows and ribbon-trimmed caps, look than low-class girls in their short kilts; how clumsy the great men in their coats and trousers compared with the boy prince with angular clothes, and a cap like a pagoda, and any number of bangles on legs and arms, who faces the preface to the first of Mouhot's volumes. The funniest of Mouhot's pictures is an amazon of the body-guard in full Highland dress, looking as pert as a vivandière.

France, by the way, claims old acquaintance with Siam. This kingdom of the free—Monang Thai, for that, despite all their slavish prostrations and generally abject ways, is their name for themselves, Siam being only a Malay word meaning brown—was visited just at the beginning of the eighteenth century by Constantine Phaulkon, a Greek merchant, who rose to be governor of all the North Provinces, and built aqueducts and temples, and otherwise distinguished himself. He persuaded the king to send an embassy to Louis the Fourteenth; and Louis sent ambassadors in return, and Jesuits with them, and—strange mixture—a general and five hundred men to hold a fort at Bangkok. Why not? The Dutch had a trading post at Ayuthia, which had, till 1350, been the capital, and where, also, are ruins and colossal figures like the Dai-butz—huge Buddha busts—in Japan. Bangkok they found, then as now, a Venice of the East. You are up in the middle of the city before you know you have reached it. All the houses were, and are, on piles, even those that are built away from the water. Everybody, from the king in his grand carved and gilded and parasolled and bannered barge to the poor fishwoman, went, and still goes, by water. Little children, who can scarcely speak, learn to handle a paddle. But the five hundred men roused suspicions; they had to go, and the Jesuits with them; and it was only by stealth that Christianity, at first tolerated, was spread among a faithful few. I want to read some day what these Jesuits say of Siam, and what Mendez Pinto and Mandelslohe—both in the first quarter of the sixteenth century—tell about it. Were there Chinese pirates and sea-kings then? They come in, like the Black Flag men nowadays, every now and then in Siamese annals; and like Norsemen they sold their swords; Pegu hired them against Siam, Burmah against both. Mun Suy was a famous man of this class whom Mouhot saw in his state

barge. He had come to trade, and then had suddenly fallen on and looted a town. The townsmen, however, rallied and drove him to his ships, but the king of Cambodia, thinking he might be useful, made friends with him, and abetted him in his raids, and once when inquisition was made for him by the king of Siam, he hid him in his palace.

Mouhot is such pleasant company that one does not like to give him up. He tells everything, how he kept himself and his escort for a franc a day, how he gave the children cigar-ends if they brought him rare insects. He is often in a strait. Being French he thinks France ought to be the pioneer of civilisation in the far East. Yet he loves England, and bitterly contrasts the kindness which he received from our people with the way in which his own nation neglected him.

Besides his insects, and shells, and plants, he collected folk-lore, only a little of which has been published. It proves these people to be as full of fun as their own apes, whose great delight is to play bob-cherry with the alligators. Holding on to one another's tails they form a string, and the last of them is the cherry, which is bobbed temptingly within an inch of the creature's jaws. One gets snapped up now and then, and the rest fly off howling; but "they come back again in a few days and renew their game."

Here is an Indo-Chinese fable in which the principle of co-operation comes out more strongly than in its European parallel. The hare used to have thick ears like other beasts. The snail gnawed them thin in consequence of a bet which could soonest reach the rice-fields of a distant village. Naturally the snail got a good start given him, and as soon as the hare had begun browsing he passed the word to his brother snail, bidding him send it along the whole line, that when the hare spoke the answer might be given from far ahead. So as soon as puss had finished her meal, she flew over the ground and began calling the snail, expecting to pass him at once. "Oho," replied a snail from ever so far on. "Why, he's nearly there," thought the hare, and was off like an arrow. In a minute or two she stopped and called again. "Oho," answered a voice still farther off. "This will never do," said puss, and rushed on so fast that she got out of breath, and gasped out: "Where are you now?" "Oho!" was the reply, quite faint in the distance. "I must make haste, or I shall lose my bet." So on she went,

stumbling, and at last stopped, dead beat, a few yards from the rice-fields. A snail was coming quietly back. "What, have you been there already? Then I've lost," and she tried to escape, but her strength failed, and the snail pitilessly gnawed her ears.

Here is a tale with a good moral: There were two cousins—Mou, cunning and selfish, owned a dog; Ah-lo-Sin, good and simple beyond measure, possessed a buffalo. Sowing time was nigh. "Come, cousin," said Mou, "your field is but small. Take my dog; he'll do your ploughing admirably; and give me your buffalo." Ah-lo-Sin was too good-natured to say "No," so he took the dog, and worked so well that he got much the better crop of the two. This made Mou so spiteful that he set fire to his cousin's field, and poor Ah-lo-Sin was in such despair that he actually went and rolled among the flames. Some monkeys who were out on a plundering expedition, saw him, and said: "This must surely be a god, for fire doesn't hurt him!" So they took and carried him to a mountain-top, and while he slept, piled up round him gold and silver bowls, and rice and rare fruits. When he awoke, he was indeed a happy man, and took home his treasures. But greedy Mou watched him, and said: "Why, you're as rich as a prince. You'll give me some, won't you?" "No," replied Ah-lo-Sin, "for you're a bad fellow, and set my field on fire." So Mou went off and set fire to his own field, and rolled in it; and forthwith came five monkeys, one of them a young one; and when the four had got him by the arms and legs, the little one began to cry: "Let me help carry him." "But there's nothing for you to hold him by," replied its mother. The little monkey went on crying, and at last got hold of Mou by the hair of the head, and led the procession. Mou didn't enjoy having his hair pulled, and bit the little monkey till it screamed. "Ah, you're angry! You're no god. Stay there, then!" cried the rest, and threw Mou into a thorn-bush. He was all day struggling before he could get out, and was covered with blood when he got home. "Well, where's your gold and silver?" asked Ah-lo-Sin. "Ah, I'm well punished for harming you!" said the repentant Mou. "I bring back nothing but needles. Call the women to take them out of me."

One fable more before I have done with Mouhot. I choose it because it makes Puss to be as clever as Brer Rabbit himself. One night, in a very thick forest,

the elephant began howling, and the tiger replied with howlings still more dismal. Monkeys, stags, and beasts of all kinds joined in the chorus, and began making off to their dens. The elephant himself lost his presence of mind, and ran away at full speed till he met the hare, who said: "What are you running away for?" "Don't you hear that dreadful tiger? Would you have me stop to be eaten up?" "Never fear," said the hare. "Just sit down and let me jump on your back, and I'll warrant no harm will happen to you." Before he jumped up the hare put a big bit of betel into his mouth, and had let a stream of red saliva run down the elephant's back by the time the tiger came up. "What do you want here?" said the hare quite fiercely, without giving the other time to say a word. "Don't you see this elephant isn't too much for me? Do you think I'll let you go shares?" So, seeing, as he supposed, the blood, the tiger got behind a tree to watch. The hare then bit the elephant's ear, and the elephant—as had been agreed between them—gave a scream. "How strong he is!" said the tiger; but he stayed a minute longer to watch. So the hare, who seemed quite master of his prey, cried: "Wait a minute, and I'll come to you next," and looked so much as though he was getting ready for a spring, that the tiger got frightened and turned tail. As he went off, swinging through the jungle, a chimpanzee burst out laughing. "Don't laugh, I've just escaped from death." "How so? I'd like to see the beast who frightened you. Take me to him." "What, to be eaten up too?" "Come, now; don't be in a fright. I'll jump on your back, and we'll tie our tails together, and then we shall run no risk." After much persuasion the tiger went back, but as he was coming near, the hare chewed a fresh bit of betel; and as the red saliva streamed down, "You dare to come back!" he shouted; "stop a minute, and I'll punish you as you deserve." At the same time he nudged the elephant, who uttered an agonising cry, while the hare made a great leap on his sham victim's back. Again the tiger lost heart, and rushed away at full speed, crying to the chimpanzee, "Now you see I'd something to be afraid of. We've both narrowly escaped being eaten up." But the chimpanzee was past hearing, for he'd fallen off the tiger's back, and got dashed to death against a bamboo. Moral: Firmness and presence of mind often make heroes of cowards.

People who can invent such tales and fables, deserve a better fate than to be "improved off the face of the earth;" let us hope their French governors, when they get them, will be of the good sort hoped for for them by the amiable Mouhot. Living either among the wild people, or with French missionaries when there were any—what a lesson in tolerance is the way in which he and they got on together!—our traveller kept fever at bay for four years. He was not so successful with animated pests. In that steamy atmosphere thrive scorpions, centipedes, mosquitos, and leeches. As you are getting into bed you have to look out for snakes. Tigers roar round the stockading, and carry off a dog or a goat; elephants come and try to force their way in to get at the young maize. Perhaps the leeches were the worst of all; they bit him savagely. "Often," he says, "my white drawers have been dyed as red as a French soldier's trousers." He has a word for everybody; his Chinese servant (one of the two who were so faithful to the last) is a model of handiness and good-humour, and the man's father he always speaks of as "the worthy old A-pait." He does not like the Annamites. They are proud, revengeful, choleric, cruel to the poor, and deserve all sorts of bad epithets, yet withal honest and kind to strangers. And as to the country, he is constantly reflecting what it might become if it were wisely governed, and settled with European colonists. Of some parts (not, of course, of the swampy forests in which much of his own time was spent) he says: "It has a rich soil, a healthy climate, nearness to the sea, a good water-way. Nothing is wanting to ensure success to an industrious and enterprising agriculturist." We hope the French pioneers who do go out will take care to get to the right place; for on Mouhot's own showing a good deal of the country is like the site of Martin Chuzzlewit's "City of Eden."

JENIFER.

BY ANNIE THOMAS (MRS. FENDER-CUDLIP).

CHAPTER XXIX. REALITIES.

THE pleasant shooting-box proffered to him and his bride, by a kindly natured but rather sketchy friend, was rather disappointing to Captain Edgcomb at the first glance.

"You'll find it a little out of order, perhaps, in the way of carpets and

curtains," the friend had said candidly; "but if your wife can do without Persian rugs and "Liberty" silk hangings for a few weeks in the midst of the loveliest scenery in the world, it's the place for you, and you're welcome to it. My servants will treat you capitally, I'm sure; and if they drink too much whisky by accident, kick 'em out."

It was a little out of order; there was no gainsaying that. The drainage, apparently, was rather worse than usual, for the cook, who received them, apologised for it. Green damp had things all its own way outside on the trellis-work and verandah. Dry rot was the reigning power in the house. Everything smelt musty and felt moist, and, to add to these inconveniences, the cook's husband, who was gardener, groom, and butler, had been affably assisting in the bottling of whisky in a Cork spirit-store in the morning, and the fumes of it having ascended to his brain, he had come home at midday quarrelsome and exhausted.

Accordingly, instead of the fairest face being put upon all things for the benefit of the new comers, the butler refused to arrange the dinner-table, and the cook bewailed herself for having to cook a dinner, and neither of them made things easy about the collecting materials for that repast.

"When the master and mistress—the Lord be good to them!—come here, they come as behoulds the gentry; it's servants they bring to do their work, and hampers full of beautiful things all ready made to ye tongue to taste. And then out from Clark come the grandest joints ready to put to the fire, and it's no trouble or vexation they give ye the whole time they're here."

Thus the irate and despairing queen of the kitchen to her fatigued and dispirited temporary mistress. But fatigued and dispirited as she was, Jenifer was still a match for any would-be petty tyrant, to whom she had not vowed obedience.

"Your master told Captain Edgcomb we should find decent and willing servants here—"

"And if ye don't, my lady, it's the faults of your honours for having come upon us unawares," Biddy said blandly.

"If I don't it will be very unpleasant for us just for to-night, and for you, when we tell your master how ungraciously you have served us," Jenifer said more severely than she would have spoken had other things not been so deplorably disappointing to her during the last few hours

"Oh!" Biddy cried, throwing her apron well over her head to conceal the tears that were not falling, "that I should live to see the bad day when strangers are sit to rule over us in the house where we've served the rale ould stock since we were born. It's not of your ladyship's honour I'm spaking," she added, with a rapid change to fawning, cringing servility, as Captain Edgcomb came up. "I'm saying, yer honour, that it's the sorrowful day for me that I can't go right away up to Cark this very minute, and bring the best out for ye that the market 'ill serve you with."

She rubbed her hands deprecatingly together as she spoke, and smiled slyly and beseechingly at Jenifer, who was more revolted by this sudden change to obsequiousness, than she had been by the rude brutality which had preceded it.

"Oh, I'm sure you'll do everything that's to be done, Biddy," he said affably. "You and I are old friends, aren't we? And now I've brought my wife here to get her first impressions of Ireland. Pleasant ones I'm sure they'll be."

"It's not 'pleasant' the young mistress thinks them, I'm fearing," howled the sycophant, again casting her apron over her now rather malignant visage. "It's I that have failed to give satisfaction to a lady, and she not my own mistress, too, for the first time since I went into service! I that was trained in the house, and that the present master's mother—saints be good to her!—trained to be her own maid! Oh, that I've lived to see the day! Oh, just all I ask of ye, since I'm despised by ye so, is to take me away and bury me; and the saints have mercy on your soul!"

"Poor thing! you've hurt her feelings awfully, Jenifer," her husband said, hurrying her out of earshot of the now hysterically sobbing cook. "These people are awfully sensitive, anything like carping at unavoidable inconveniences, or want of sympathy with their endeavours to do their best to serve you, hurts them painfully. Do try to be a little less hard, dear. When I've been here with O'Connor and his wife, everything has gone admirably. You'll find Biddy and the rest of them as easy to manage as infants, if only you're gentle and consistent with them."

"Perhaps that course of treatment would agree better with me also," Jenifer thought, but she only said:

"Biddy shall not suffer from my rough heavy-handed sway an hour longer if I can help it. Do let us go to some little quiet

country hotel, where we shall be quite unknown and independent. I have heard of the inn at Cappoquin. Effie stayed there once; you won't dispute her taste; and she declared it to be the 'nicest thing of the kind that she had seen in Ireland.'"

"You suggest a very ridiculous alternative out of a very puerile difficulty, dear," he said, laughing in the superior manner he felt it well to assume over Jenifer. "After accepting the loan of a fellow's place, and staff of servants, for a honeymoon, it would be rather 'crude,' to say the least of it, to go off in a huff, simply because there was no dinner prepared to meet your views on our arrival."

"The dinner is of no importance to me," she said wearily; "a cup of tea and some dry toast will satisfy all my requirements."

"Mine are a little more substantial," he laughed; "and I think, dear, you'll find that Biddy, who has been accustomed to Mrs. O'Connor's sensible and practical rule, will think rather more lowly of your housewifely powers than you deserve, if you don't have a consultation with her, and evolve a decent dinner out of the resources of this district for eight o'clock."

But, when Jenifer went to put her lord's precepts into practice, she found that Biddy was not at all amenable to her advances. Larry, Biddy's husband, had by this time crept out of a coal-hole, where he had been indulging in happy if not healthful slumbers, and had, through violently restorative means, pulled himself together. For instance, he had drunk a pint of milk (charged afterwards to the quality as having been supplied for Jenifer's cup of tea), and his head had been dipped into a pailful of water by his spouse. She had then scrubbed up his face and hands with plenty of soap, soda, and hot water, and having put a fine ruddy polish on him, she had set him about his work of ordering the table fairly.

But though Biddy had put this part of the business in working order, and though she meant it to be all right at the last, she was determined to give the feminine invader a "good twisting" for her rash threat of informing the absent master of his retainer's incapacity and insolence.

"She's the impudence to come here and expect to be treated like one of our own; she that, for all her grand looks and high ways, is glad to come to another man's house than her husband's in her first married days. Foof!" and with this unspellable but expressive exclamation of the

most dire contempt, Biddy settled herself with her dudden in the kitchen chimney-corner, and waited events, knowing all the while that in the larder she had hanging a leg of mutton, the like of which had seldom come out of Cork market even; soles, that had evidently come into existence for the express purpose of being delicately treated to egg, breadcrumbs, and the process of frying; and many other delicacies, mention of which need not be made here.

Accordingly, when Jenifer made her way into the close, unsavoury, and scantily-furnished kitchen, Biddy gave her no greeting, but still squatted down on her haunches, retaining her balance while in that attitude in a way that was almost miraculous, considering the quantity of whisky she had absorbed into her system since her husband had come home with a bottle concealed among his rags about two hours before.

"Captain Edgecumb asked me to come and speak to you about dinner—at eight o'clock he wants to have it. Can you get us anything to eat by that time?"

"There's fine praties in the cow-shed, and there's some of the mistress's game-fowls running in the yard," Biddy answered, puffing out a volume of strong smoke.

"They'll be tough, won't they?" Jenifer suggested.

"Is it the praties will be tough?" Biddy asked with a scornful laugh.

"No, the fowls."

"The mistress's prize game-fowls ye're meaning; they're tender enough for the master and mistress, may be they'll be too tough for you, my lady."

Jenifer glanced round the smoke and filth stained apartment, and a feeling came over her that if she stayed there an instant longer, she would revolt at everything cooked in it. So merely saying: "Well, do your best for us, please, Biddy, by eight o'clock, remember," she turned to leave the kitchen.

The cook was melted by this forbearance.

"Don't you fear, ma'am, that you'll not have as decent a dinner as ever was placed before quality at eight o'clock. Sure and it's I who'd do my best for a grand gentleman like the captain, for 'tis he that always has the kind word and smile for a servant, and many a time he's stood between Larry and the master, when Larry's had the drop too much. See, now," and she got up from her crouching attitude with startling

alacrity, and flung open the door of a larder that was a curiosity by reason of its indescribable muddle, dirt, and high smells. "I was just tasing ye, I was," she said ingratiatingly. "See what I have here! It's this that is the fine leg of mutton, sure, and the soles asking ye to ate them, they're so fresh and beautiful, and the turkey that's been fed in my own daughter's kitchen, where the best turkeys that go into Cork market are reared, and the lobster for the master's salad. Oh, it's not I that have forgotten anything, and ye'll be telling the master so now, won't ye, my lady, and not get poor old Biddy into trouble," she added coaxingly.

"I shall be satisfied with everything so long as Captain Edgecumb is," Jenifer said, backing out of reach of the pungent odours which proceeded from every object, Biddy included, around her. Then Biddy's spirit became buoyant again, and she proceeded to show the "new mistress" to her bedroom, chattering all the way up the dusty stairs with a volubility that made Jenifer long for a return of silent sulks.

The dinner was as good as Biddy in her better mood had promised it should be. And as the table, with its fair display of snow-white napery, brightly-polished silver, and glittering glass, was the only one clean spot Jenifer's eyes had lighted upon since she came into the house, she regarded it with pleasure.

Captain Edgecumb regarded it with pleasure also, from a different point of view. Biddy had not overrated her culinary powers, and the wine, which Larry selected from his master's cellar, did credit to his own taste. In explanation of the secret of his selection, it may be told that he took a fair toll on every bottle he opened for his master's guests, never giving them anything which he did not find good enough for his own drinking.

"This is very pretty and comfortable, isn't it?" said Captain Edgecumb as they sat together at an open window and looked out upon a disorderly garden, rich in the natural beauties of myrtle, sweet-scented verbena, flowering laurel, arbutus-trees covered with fast-ripening berries, and many another of the exquisite evergreens for which the south of Ireland is so justly famous.

"Yes. Why don't they keep it cleaner?" Jenifer assented, and asked.

"Oh, I don't know! Owner's been absent for some time, you know. It used to be all clean and nice enough when

Mrs. O'Connor was here herself to superintend things. If you go the right way to work with these servants, you'll soon have the house like a new pin."

"I'm afraid I shall be a long time finding out the right way," she said brightly. "I shall begin by asking them to use pails of water and disinfecting fluid over everything, not excepting themselves."

"Then you'll huff them, and they'll hate you. If you contemplate making any such injudicious suggestions as that, you had better leave things to me, dear."

"Very well—agreed; if you'll promise that you'll have the place got clean for me," she said gaily.

"And now sing to me, Jenifer," he said, opening a piano and then drawing her towards it with an air of proprietorship.

"If you don't mind, I'd rather not sing till I've rested. My throat is rather sore to-night; to-morrow, probably, I shall be all right."

"But I do mind," he replied with affectionate imperiousness. "I don't mean you to get into the habit of refusing to oblige me by singing when you have no public engagement to fulfil which would necessitate your being careful of your voice."

"If I'm to do anything with it, I must always be careful of it, you know."

"Perhaps I know more about it than you imagine," he laughed, remembering the American actor's prophecy concerning the success she would be sure to make on the dramatic stage with her face and figure, should she even fail as a vocalist.

But Jenifer held to her determination not to sing, feeling as she did that to try her voice in her present weakened and nervous state would be to injure it and do herself scant justice. And her refusal annoyed Captain Edgecumb and caused him to vividly remember that other cause of annoyance which she had given him with regard to Jack and his wife.

"As your mother is so devoted to Jack and his wife, I almost wonder it doesn't occur to her to go and live with them at the home-farm. The trifle she could pay would be of use to them."

"My mother cannot endure Mrs. Jack."

"Why should she have thought the prospect of Mrs. Jack endurable in my house, then, may I ask?"

"Because my mother loves her son, and she can't be kind to him without being kind to his wife also."

"My people won't like being liable to meet Mrs. Jack Ray—you understand that, don't you, dear?"

"I think I understand."

"You're not going to lose your temper because I venture to make a remark about not wishing to have objectionable people at my house, are you, Jenifer?" he asked pleadingly, and though Jenifer felt that it was all pitifully small and wearing, for the sake of the peace that was so dear to her, she allowed herself to be kissed and treated as if she were a very precious but rather unreasonable child.

"We'll have some trout-fishing to-morrow," he said cheerfully, as they went upstairs that night. But on the morrow it rained all day, as it did the day after that, and after that again, without intermission. The fires would not burn by reason of the chimneys being choked with soot. The damp hung in dew-drops on the walls. Larry got wet through with innocent rain while going into Cork for provisions, and wet through with less innocent whisky when he got there. Consequently he returned minus most of the things he had bought, and in a general state of incapacity. The London papers were stale when they reached this secluded shooting-box. The Irish papers did not interest Captain Edgecumb. The piano went dumb in half its notes through the damp. Jenifer caught a virulent sore-throat from the same cause, united with bad drainage. None of the neighbouring gentry were resident. There were scarcely any books in the house. And Jenifer found that the time had not yet arrived when she "could talk to Captain Edgecumb without tennis, or other people."

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hesitation most unusual with him—for, in the first place, Father Puttock was an expert, and in the second place, he laid down the law so demonstratively that a "but" seemed idiotic; "but don't you think that Friend Munn will still fancy he had some hand in the appointment?"

"How can he? The bishop appoints."

"But he binds the bishop to appoint."

"Nothing of the sort, my dear sir, excuse me. The bishop, on the lapse of the living, will appoint, whether Mr. Munn likes it or not. It is the law that binds the bishop to appoint. Mr. Munn's interference in the matter amounts simply to this: he minimises, as far as lies in his power, what he thinks an evil—Church patronage—by securing the appointment of the best man to be had. It is simply choosing the lesser of two evils. You don't think cowpox a good thing in itself, doctor, but you think it a good thing as a security against smallpox; and you don't think the law in league with disease because it binds a parent to have his child vaccinated."

"Yes, but all this only goes to prove that Friend Munn might, without scruple, make the appointment himself directly."

"What, against his conscience!" exclaimed Father Puttock, aghast.

"But why should the direct appointment be more against his conscience than this indirect binding of the bishop to appoint him?"

"My dear sir," replied the good father, in a tone of some impatience, "can't you see that Mr. Munn may think his conscience a law to himself but not to the bishop? He may very well think it wrong to make this appointment himself, and yet not think it wrong in the bishop to make it or for him to suggest it to the bishop. The Queen may think it wrong to appoint directly to a bishopric, but she doesn't think a *congé d'élire* wrong."

"Well, I hope Friend Munn will see it in this light."

"I'm not sure that he will. Some of these pretentious plain-dealers are all casuistry, Jesuitry, and hair-splitting, when you come to tackle them. I never met a man of them who was straightforward. I don't know that it wouldn't be your safest plan, doctor, to say nothing to either Munn or Pybus one way or the other; but just to write to the bishop and extract from him a promise to appoint Pybus to Edgburn in the event of its lapsing into his lordship's hands, giving him clearly to understand that on this condition only the patronage

would be allowed to lapse. In this way the thing could be managed to the satisfaction of every conscience concerned. The bishop would be glad of the patronage of Chirnside, which would fall to him by Pybus's promotion to Edgburn; Munn would be glad to be rid with a safe conscience of the living, which Pybus would be glad with a safe conscience to accept."

This plan did not recommend itself to the doctor, in part because it left out of account his own conscience—which was laic and queasy—and in part, because he had already broached the matter to Mr. Munn. He fell back, therefore, on the good father's original advice. Perhaps Friend Munn would not think it casuistical. Friend Munn, so far from thinking it casuistical, welcomed it as a righteous escape out of the difficulty. He couldn't bring himself to write direct to the bishop at the cost of calling him "My lord," but he wrote to the doctor a letter to be shown to the bishop, in which he said he would be glad to let the patronage lapse, in the hope of the bishop's appointing Mr. Pybus to the living. The doctor wrote, enclosing this letter, to the bishop, urging Mr. Pybus's claims upon his lordship, and hinting incidentally that Mr. Pybus's views would not permit him to accept the living from a member of the Society of Friends.

The bishop replied with the courtesy he always used towards laymen, and especially laymen of position, promising that, if the patronage was allowed to lapse to him, he would appoint Mr. Pybus to the living.

But there were still some months to run ere the living lapsed, and the bishop had plenty of time to forget, and did forget, the doctor's hint about Mr. Pybus's peculiar views of the Quakers. Thus it happened that in his letter offering the Rev. John the living, his lordship thought it right to mention that the offer really came from Mr. Munn, who, as a Member of the Society of Friends, had a conscientious objection to a direct exercise of his patronage. Here was an ugly hitch!

In a moment the Rev. John saw through the design of this member of the objectionable sect. Mr. Munn had read his pamphlet on Baptism at Birth by Total Immersion, and its incidental exposure of the Society of Friends as the mother of undetected murderers, who were shielded by their profession from suspicion, and by the *esprit de corps* of the sect from detection. This trenchant exposure must be hushed up, and its author silenced by bribery.

Else why should a Quaker, of whom he knew nothing, and who could know nothing of him except from his pamphlet, offer him a living? And offer it, too, with such an insidious indirectness. This indirectness was, in itself, decisive of Mr. Munn's motive. If Mr. Munn had directly appointed him, the world would know what to think of the appointment and its motive, of the patron, and of his sect. But while the world was to be allowed to think that the appointment was the bishop's, he, Mr. Pybus, was to be privately informed that it was really Mr. Munn's. Thus he was to be bribed without the bribery defeating its own object of arousing the world's attention to the transaction, and its suspicion as to its secret springs.

Thus the Rev. John reasoned, not plausibly merely, but cogently upon the premises before him. Lest the reader should condemn him as silly or insane in his views, we shall epitomise his grounds for them, as stated in the before-mentioned pamphlet.*

If, he argued, the theory of sacramental grace is true, then such Christians as have no sacraments must, on the average, be below other Christian sects in virtue. But the Quakers have no sacraments. Then the Quakers must be below the average, in virtue, of all other Christian sects. But they seem above it? Certainly. Therefore, they must be hypocrites. But hypocrites always pretend most to the precise virtues in which they are consciously most deficient, protest too much, in fact. What then is the special virtue to which the Quakers pretend most? Blood-guiltlessness. That, therefore, is the very virtue in which we should expect them to be most deficient. Was it, then, too much to assume that all, or nearly all, the undetected murderers in England were members of the Society of Friends? The conclusion was irresistible. The mere fact of the murderers remaining undetected made against a sect which was the most clannish, and had the reputation of being the most peaceable of all Christian denominations; because both the hypocrisy and the mutual loyalty of its members combined to cloak its crimes; not all of them, indeed, for the most horrible of modern murderers was detected, and found, of course, to be a Quaker. Then followed a circumstantial account of a revolting murder committed by Tawell,

a Quaker, at Slough, fifty years ago. Was it possible then to doubt that the Quakers were the modern sicarii? It was not possible.

Such was the Rev. John's argument, as set forth in his pamphlet. We have, of course, condensed it, but without, we think, omitting anything material. We do not give it to convert our readers to his theory, for we are not converts to it ourselves. We are not convinced that all undetected murderers are Quakers, or that the sect is above the average in secret or visible villainy. But we admit, and expect our readers to admit, that anyone reasoning from the Rev. John's premises would not come very wide of his conclusions. Therefore, there was something to be said, not only for his theory, but for his construction of this offer of a living from a Quaker, who could, he thought, have known of his existence only from his pamphlet. For, of course, the doctor had been discreet enough to say nothing, even to Mrs. John, of his negotiation with Friend Munn.

Though the living must, of course, be declined, the offer of it delighted the Rev. John more than any promotion, however high, could have done. For was it not an absolute confirmation of his views?

Poor Mrs. John, after many a wistful sigh, said only and timidly:

"You couldn't think, then, of accepting it, dear?"

"Mary!" exclaimed the Rev. John, in a tone which was at once surprised, shocked, and reproachful. "Mary!"

"I was thinking of Archie," said Mrs. John apologetically, and then relapsed into sad silence, thinking of Archie still.

The Rev. John hardly heard her. He was astride his hobby, galloping it as one gallops with news of a great victory. This letter was conclusive. No prejudice could stand up before it. He had but to read it to convince the clergy of the rural deanery, of the diocese, of both Houses of Convocation. He had but to print it to convert the people of England to his views. It is true, it was absolutely conclusive only upon his views of the Quakers, but it was strong presumptive evidence of the truth of the baptismal theory, from which these views were a deduction. When Leverrier's prediction of the existence, position, and precise mass of the planet Neptune was verified, its verification went a good way towards the establishment of the wide theory from which it was a deduction. Thus argued the Rev. John, jubilant, to Mrs. John, dejected and wretched.

* "Baptism at Birth by Total Immersion," Hick and Hargreaves, Leeds, 1867.

To them, in happy time, enters Dr. Grice, amazed to find the Rev. John lively as a tortoise in summer. The doctor was not a polite man, but short and sharp, caustic and cynically sincere. He loved a jest, even a biting jest, and would sacrifice a patient to one any day. As for this theory of the Rev. John's about the Quakers, he had been merciless in his ridicule of it. The Rev. John bore his gibes with the silence of scorn, and the patience of strength. His theory was no house of cards to be blown down by an airy jest. But now was the moment of a revenge, calm but crushing.

"Good news!" asked the doctor with some suspicion of the contents of the letter the Rev. John held in his triumphant hand.

The Rev. John handed him the letter silently, and watched his face as he read for the expression which soon began to cloud it.

In truth, the doctor was annoyed to find that the bishop had forgotten his caution against the mention of Friend Munn's name, and it was the expression of this annoyance in the doctor's face which the Rev. John perceived, not without triumph.

"What do you say now, doctor?" he asked.

"I'm surprised——"

"You admit it?"

"Eh?"

"You admit that this can have only one meaning?"

"How?"

"Come, Dr. Grice, there's no use pretending that you don't know why Mr. Munn should think of me for this living."

"Mrs. John," thought the doctor, "has heard of, or divined, my share in the business."

"Munn's a Quaker," he confessed, depreciating his own kindness after his manner. "Munn's a Quaker, and was glad to be rid of the accursed thing."

"But he's not rid of it," cried the Rev. John with a vehemence that was startling from him.

"What! you won't accept it?"

"Accept it! when the bribe is so clear that you see it yourself! I shall expose it," he cried, bringing his hand down on the table in the extraordinary excitement of his present and anticipated triumph. "I shall expose it, till there is no doubt left in the mind of any reasonable man—layman or clergyman, Churchman or Dissenter—in England."

Light was breaking in upon the doctor.

"You think it's meant to silence you?" he gasped.

"I think it! I know it, and you know it, and everyone shall know it."

The doctor lay back in his chair and roared with laughter, cried with laughter, which he made not the least effort to restrain.

"My dear sir," he snorted when he was at last able to articulate, "Friend Munn never heard of you till I mentioned you to him myself."

"Just so; he knows nothing of me, but he knows my pamphlet."

"Your pamphlet! Good gracious!"

Here the doctor went off into another uncontrollable paroxysm of laughter, which staggered the Rev. John, and gave some pain and at the same time some hope to Mrs. John, for perhaps the living might be accepted with a safe conscience, after all.

When the doctor had again recovered himself, he turned to Mrs. John as a rational creature.

"Look here, Mrs. John, Friend Munn is a patient of mine, and I asked him for this living for you. He had scruples about appointing to it, so I suggested that he might let it lapse to the bishop with an intimation to his lordship that he would be glad if he would appoint Mr. Pybus to it. Friend Munn consented, and put the thing into my hands to manage. I wrote to the bishop and got his promise—Stay, I think I have his letter in my pocket-book," searching for it, finding it, and handing it to the Rev. John.

The Rev. John, crestfallen, read the letter and handed it back in silence.

"There you have the whole history of the business," said the doctor, as he replaced the letter in his pocket-book. "Friend Munn knows nothing of you, or your views, or your pamphlet, so you can accept the living without scruple."

The Rev. John shook his head.

"If he knows nothing of my views I have no right to accept it from him," he said moodily.

The sudden dejection from triumph to humiliation, the doctor's merciless and unmeasured ridicule, and the melting into thin air in a moment of the baseless fabric of his vision of the conversion of a world, were too trying even to his mild temper. Nevertheless, he soon recollected himself, and his debt to the doctor.

"You won't think me unthankful to

you, Dr. Grice, for your kindness in the matter if I'm compelled conscientiously to decline it. I couldn't accept it honestly from Mr. Munn while he remains in ignorance of my views."

"I don't think your views would weigh with him one way or the other," said the doctor impatiently. "Besides, the living has passed out of his hands now, and he has no more to do with it than I have. Surely you can accept it from your bishop?"

"The bishop would no more give it to me than Mr. Munn, if he knew my views. He is the lowest Churchman on the bench," exclaimed the Rev. John somewhat excitedly; and he then proceeded to denounce the bishop's last charge, in which his lordship seemed to speak of baptism as something more, perhaps, than the entry of the child's name in the baptismal register, but as something a great deal less than its registration in the Book of Life.

To convince the doctor that he wasn't in the least exaggerating the spirit of the charge, he fetched it from his study and read the terrible paragraph at length.

"But you accepted this living from him," urged the doctor.

"Certainly not, Dr. Grice. I accepted it from the Crown. It's in the patronage of the Crown and bishop alternately. If I resign, the patronage falls to him, and he will put one of his own school in—Metcalf probably!" in a voice of horror.

"But if you don't resign he will put one of these werewolves into Edgburn, a much larger and more important parish."

"That only proves that he wouldn't put me there if he knew my views."

The doctor gave it up with a slight shrug of his shoulders, changed the conversation which he addressed to Mrs. John, and rose soon after to take his leave. Mrs. John, distressed by his evident annoyance, went with him to the hall-door to make the best she could of the business.

"He feels all your kindness to the very heart, Dr. Grice, but he can't express it. He never can—nor can I—I never can express all I owe to you—I never know where to begin."

Mrs. John looked what she felt, and, of course, felt all she said; with good reason, too, for the doctor's kindnesses were past count.

"Pooh, pooh! Kindness! Nonsense! There should be no talk of kindness in a friendship like ours, Mrs. John," taking and holding her hand in his own for a

moment. "You think I'm annoyed, and I am annoyed—of course I'm annoyed. The very thing you wanted, a good living, near a good school, not out of reach of your old friends here, and, as far as I'm concerned—and to tell you the truth I was thinking as much of myself as of you—I should practically be nearer you than I am now. To fling it all away because the bishop won't swallow this pill of his that's good against the earthquake!"

"But if his conscience——"

"Bah! Conscience! Conscience is a policeman always off his beat when there's a burglar in the business, but promptly down on the small boys. There's you to think of, and that boy to think of, and all the good he might do in a large parish to think of, and he thinks only of this fad of his, and only because it is his. There, don't be angry with me, or think me angry because my small part in the business is thrown away. I'm not angry; I'm disappointed—that's all. I've been for months looking forward to this as a happy surprise to you, and it has only made you more miserable."

And, indeed, Mrs. John looked so sad that even the Rev. John remarked it. Now, any trouble of hers, when he realised it, went to his very soul. He couldn't eat, or sleep, or even day-dream, when it came home to him that she was unhappy. He would then leave the study twenty times a day, look for and find her, and follow her about, or take her hand, or smooth back her hair, or in some other dumb way try to express his yearning sympathy.

"What is it, Mary?" he asked anxiously, on observing her depression.

Mrs. John then opened her heart. It seems that she held herself in some way responsible for the blighting of Archie's prospects. She had cozened Mr. Tuck out of him, and so had not only stolen him from Mr. Tuck, but had stolen Mr. Tuck's fortune from him. And now to the loss of his due place in the world was to be added the loss of all chance of his making his way in the world—the loss of a good education. Thus Mrs. John pathetically, and then, after a pause, she added reverently:

"And I can't help thinking the living has been sent to us, John."

Now, the Rev. John's faith in Mrs. John, not in her goodness only, but in her wisdom, was profound. He almost held his theory by the tenure of her faith in it. Certainly, her faith in it weighed more

with him than the unbelief of all the rest of the world. He worshipped his own ideas in her as an idolater worships the image his own hand has carved. Now, if Mrs. John, who was of the true faith, thought, not the acceptance, but the refusal of this living wrong, there must be something to be said, and a good deal to be said, for accepting it. What was to be said therefor, the Rev. John, after much meditation, discovered and communicated in this letter to Dr. Grice :

"DEAR DR. GRICE, — On reconsideration, I've decided to accept Edgburn, not from the bishop or Mr. Munn, both of whom have disclaimed the patronage, but from Providence, and, under Providence, from you. I think, on reflection, you will admit that I was right this morning in my position that it was not possible for me, as an honest man, to accept the living from patrons in ignorance of my views. Most clearly it has come to me, however, not from the bishop or Mr. Munn—who have let it go out of their hands—but from Providence and from you. I was too much disturbed this morning to thank you for your great kindness in the matter, but I'm sure you will forgive this neglect, and believe me to be most sincerely grateful to you. I've just written to the bishop my acceptance of Edgburn.—Believe me, dear Dr. Grice, very truly yours,

"JOHN PYBUS."

The doctor, on receipt of the letter, thought of the Abbess of Andoüillet and the contumacious mules. The religious conscience, he thought, must be a thing *sui generis*. Here were the abbess, Father Puttock, Friend Munn, and the Rev. John, four devotees—in all other respects wide as the poles apart—who yet agree in playing bo-peep with their conscience to keep the child quiet.

CHRONICLES OF ENGLISH COUNTIES.

NOTTINGHAM. PART II.

THE beaten soldiers who fled from the battlefield of Stoke, such of them as won their way across the Trent, and scrambled up the steep bank by Fiskerton, once out of the press and confusion of the hideous rout would have found themselves by the side of a pleasant stream that here joins the main river, and if they followed its course through meadows and corn-lands, they might have reached sanctuary and

safety within the precincts of the ancient minster of Southwell. To one who visits Southwell at the present day the little town, with its comfortable red-brick houses embowered in trees, seems a charming refuge from the cares of life—with its background of softly rounded hills, that run back to the once great forest of Sherwood, with its green encircling meadows and pleasant shady footpaths, with its bright river, well stocked with delicious red trout. Pleasant, too, is the quiet high-street, with its gabled houses and old-fashioned inns. The oldest of these inns, with the wide archway opening into the great inn-yard, is little changed since the days of the Civil Wars, when the fated Stuart king, here in one of these parlours, gave himself into the hands of the leaders of the Scottish army. That army was then besieging Newark, one of the last strongholds that held out for the king, and Charles, whose affairs were now in a desperate state, had made his way from Oxford with only one servant in his suite, passing through the midst of enemies to reach the Scotch. The king had some vague hope, perhaps, that his appearance might revive the loyalty of his ancient subjects, and that the Scottish army might, at any rate, make favourable conditions for him. Charles could hardly have imagined the possibility of the Scotchmen selling him for a price, but in all his career the king seems never to have grasped thoroughly the realities of his position, or to have been capable of gauging the characters of those with whom he had to deal.

Tradition has preserved an incident of the king's visit to Southwell, which, trifling in itself, throws a little light upon Charles's fateful and melancholy nature. It was in this quiet high-street, then thronged with horsemen and men-at-arms, with sturdy Scotchmen in armour, that was even then so ancient and old-fashioned that it might have done duty at Bannockburn or Flodden—it was here, in the shadow of the great minster, that there lived a strongly religious cobbler, one of the new sect of Separatists, a stern and rigid Puritan. To him entered the king, unknown, and wrapped in his long cloak, but with some evidence of his rank, no doubt, in the lace of his falling collar and long ruffles, while in his hand he held the ivory-headed staff, whose ivory head was presently to topple off so ominously at the king's trial. The cobbler

eyed the gracious figure with aversion and dismay, as the king explained his errand; simply to be measured for a pair of shoes. "No," said the cobbler brusquely when the king had finished, he would make no shoes for him. The king pressed for an explanation of this refusal. Just such a figure, the shoemaker solemnly declared, had appeared to him in his dreams the night before, with the providential warning that nothing but misfortune would follow him and those who served him. The king was overwhelmed at this announcement, which he received in all faith as a supernatural warning. He raised his eyes to heaven, and with a pious ejaculation of resignation to the will of Providence, he hurried away from the scene.

But, turning out of the high-street and coming in sight of the minster church with its hoary towers, the first impression is of surprise and something like awe. The grand old minster, hidden away in this quiet little country town, seems as if it must have been the work of men of much greater stature and of simpler, more massive minds. And it looks so worn with age, and yet so strong and dignified in its air of calm repose, that you feel in presence of something above the assaults of time. And all the surroundings are in keeping, the green graveyard whitened with tombs, the cawing of the rooks from the presbyterial elms, the soft chant of the choristers from within, while sunshine only seems to add a depth to the hoary tints of its ancient walls. And then to listen to its lazy old chimes as they troll out with senile cheerfulness "God save the King"—it is king quite clearly, not queen; but what king? Which of the Edwards or Henrys has the old chime got in mind?

It was but the other day, these old towers may tell us, that, having tolled their most solemn dirges for good Queen Bess, they began ringing out a welcome to Scotch King James, who presently came past on his ambling steed, with all the nobility of the land pressing about him. There was some gleam of insight about the lubberly king, for when he saw the towers of Southwell he was lost in admiration and surprise. His courtiers rather compassionately began to deprecate his admiration, contrasting this humble fane with the grandeur of York or Durham. "Vary well, vary well," replied the king, "but by my bluid this kirk shall jostle wi' York or Durham, or any kirk in Christendom!" And surely Jamie

was right, for it is not the size and splendour so much as the sentiment of the building that wins our admiration.

And the interior of the minster is equally effective, the solemn strength of the Norman nave contrasting with the light and pure Early English of the choir, and the rich and jewel-like chapter-house, at the entrance to which is a floral arch which is a veritable poem in stone. In the transept stands a rich alabaster altar tomb, on which reposes the effigy of Archbishop Sandys, one of the earliest post-reformation prelates, with a long array of children kneeling in relief below, a strange contrast to the severe sacerdotal effigies of old. An exemplary father, too, was Sandys, and handsomely provided for his children out of the surplus wealth of the see; but he did something for education as well in the foundation of Hawkshead grammar-school, where Wordsworth was once a schoolboy.

The tomb of the archbishop reminds us of the long connection between Southwell and the Archbishopric of York, and on the south and sunny side of the minster, in a pleasant garden, are the remains of the old palace of the archbishop, a favourite retreat of Cardinal Wolsey. Here came the Lord Cardinal in his disguise, and remained all the pleasant summer of that year—1530—when he left for York, planning a magnificent entry into that city and his enthronisation in the minster, but was arrested on his way by Percy of Northumberland on a charge of high treason.

A rich and stately endowment was this of Southwell, which still preserved its wealthy stalls and prebends after the Reformation. And with its rich clerical families and comfortable dower-houses, up to our own times Southwell has been a kind of social centre of county life. "Detestable and abhorred hole of scandal," Lord Byron terms the place. But then, the poet's memories of Southwell were embittered by the ridicule brought upon him by his mother's violent sallies of temper. In her storms of rage, Mrs. Byron thought nothing of hurling poker and tongs at her son, and their tumultuous quarrels were the talk of the town. Else young Byron seems to have entered into the life of the place with zest, and to have joined in all the amusements going. "I enacted Penruddock of *The Wheel of Fortune*," he writes, "and *Tristram Fickle* in Allingham's farce of *The Weathercock*, at Southwell." And the young Apollo bathed assiduously in the Greet, a fact

that should render classic this pleasant little river. Here, too, he wrote some of his early poems, and he printed and published them with Ridge, of Newark, a bookseller whose business is still carried on by a descendant in the market-place of that town. Mrs. Byron lived in the house called Burgage Manor, on the green. But at last Byron abandoned his mother's roof and ran away to London to begin his brilliant meteor-like career in earnest.

And now our way lies across Sherwood, the once great central wild of England, the abode of robbers and outlaws, where they had free range through a succession of wilds and wastes, from Nottingham town to merry Carlisle; a region where the king's writs ran not, and where his sheriffs were powerless unless they appeared with hue and cry, and horns and clamour, to hunt out some notorious malefactor, as if he were a wild beast. Here, too, was the haunt of the wolf long after he was extirpated in the rest of England. As late as the reign of King Henry the Sixth, Sir Robert Plumpton held one bovate of land in Mansfield Woodhouse, called Wolfhunt-land, on the tenure of chasing or frightening the wolves in the forest of Sherwood.

But it is with Robin Hood that Sherwood is associated in most people's minds; with Robin Hood and Little John, and the rest of his merry men, who, though known and famed in all the counties round about, seem to have had their chief haunts and holds in Sherwood, by Nottingham, where bold Robin has given his name to many a holt and hill. There in the softer climate of the hills that slope towards the south, were spent the happier hours of the life under the greenwood tree.

I kan not parfitly my paternoster as the priest it sayeth,
But I kan rhymes of Robin Hode and Randolph,
Earl of Chester,

says the old popular bard, but in these days the paternoster is better kanned or known than the legends of Robin even at the very scene of his exploits, and so we may here briefly recapitulate the story of his life as told in chapbooks and ballads.

Robin's father is a forester, his mother niece to Guy, Earl of Warwick, of legendary fame; but the Saxon lineage is noticeable. Robin himself is born at Loxley, in Staffordshire, and at Tutbury marries or carries off a pretty shepherdess, the Maid Marian of the story. Robin quarrels with the king's foresters, or rather they quarrel with him for killing the king's deer; anyhow,

he kills fifteen of these foresters—their graves are to be seen to this day to testify—upon which he takes to the woods, and raises a band of outlaws. Robin sets the sheriff at defiance, and the king himself comes against him with his power. And then, according to most accounts, Robin waylays the king alone in the forest and unattended, brings him to his haunt, and feasts him well, and conducts him safely back to his lodging. The king, upon that, invites Robin to his court—either in London or at Nottingham—and Robin astonishes the courtiers and pleases the king by his skill and prowess. In all the stories Robin is of high lineage on one side or the other, as becomes a popular hero. In all this, while there is a good deal of unmistakable folk-lore, there is probably a basis of fact, and the tradition that makes him claim to be Earl of Huntingdon, absurd as it seems, has been curiously corroborated by the researches of antiquarians. For, according to some, Robin is Robert Oeth, son of Fitzoeth, Lord of Kyme, in Lincolnshire, himself descended on the female side from Waltheof, the great Saxon hero, the venerated martyr of the Conquest, who was at once Earl of Northampton and Huntingdon—just the lineage, indeed, to claim the sympathies and affection of good English folk. According to this account, Robin would have flourished in Henry the Second's reign, and his appearance in *Ivanhoe* as contemporary with Richard Cœur de Lion may be fairly justified. The common tradition of Robin's death at Kirklees, in Yorkshire (where his grave is still shown), where he is said to have been bled to death by the prioress of the nunnery there, either through misadventure or treachery, is generally believed to be well-founded.

The forest of Robin's days has well-nigh disappeared. It lasted to the reign of Queen Anne as a royal forest, but has now mostly gone to swell the estates of noble landowners, and is to be traced in the wide parks and great seats of the nobility so thickly settled hereabouts that the district has got the name of The Dukeries. And the road from Southwell, passing through several secluded villages, brings us to Rufford Abbey, once a part of the magnificent domain of the Talbots, but which passed by marriage to the Lumleys of the Scarborough title, and is now held by a Saville—a name not long since famous in the sporting world. The abbey origi-

nally was a settlement of Cistercians, from Rievaulx, in Yorkshire, but has left no mark in history. Close by is Olipstone, where stand the forlorn ruins of an ancient palace of the kings of England—a few shapeless masses of stone upstanding among the ploughed fields, and there is still growing an old oak known as the Parliament Oak, where it is said the primitive conclave was held, at which King Edward the First presided when he was called away to the death-bed of Eleanor. Clipstone is of course familiar to a Londoner in Clipstone Street, and as Portland Street is close by Clipstone Street, he will make a shrewd guess that the seat of the dukes of Portland is probably near at hand. Clipstone, indeed, lies in the domains of Welbeck Abbey, the chief seat of the Bentinck family. But the old abbey is altogether swallowed up in the modern house, which in its great extent and curious surroundings, is mainly the work of the late Duke of Portland, one of the most eccentric figures of a county rather distinguished for eccentricities. The original monks of Welbeck were Premonstratensians, or white canons, their dress a white cassock with a rochet over it, a long white cloak, and white cap. A somewhat similar figure was presented by the last tenant of Welbeck, whose usual attire was a long and capacious white flannel dressing-gown, in which he received the few people whom he deigned to see. The duke was indeed a perfect recluse, not of the canonical order, indeed, but with a strong vehement passion for isolated existence. Every road and footpath that traversed his estate he suppressed, as far as was in his power, and every house upon his property above the rank of a farmhouse or labourer's cottage he pulled down. And then he began his mysterious operations at Welbeck—operations which were long the talk and wonder of the neighbourhood. The duke never rode and scarcely ever mounted a carriage, and yet the stables, the coach-houses, the riding-school of his building, are all on the most magnificent scale. But the wonder of the place is the subterranean palace he has created—subterranean chambers and tunnels, with a library and a church, all excavated from the limestone-rock, with a roadway giving access to all, carried in a long tunnel under the park. To ensure his privacy, the duke built thirty-five or forty lodges on the outskirts of his park, all the outbuildings of which are underground; and to carry out his immense

building operations, he had a complete timber-yard with saw-mills and the most elaborate machinery, while a complete fire-brigade was maintained for the safety of the premises. We shall seek in vain for any adequate motive for these costly and wasteful freaks; for it must be remembered that the duke was a keen and excellent man of business, a clever agriculturist, and a good and liberal landlord; but, without looking for motives, we may find in the history of the family the origin of the tendencies that came to such curious development in the chief of the Bentincks.

Welbeck Abbey, after the dissolution of the monasteries, after passing through the hands of the Osbornes, became the property of the Cavendish family; and the original founder of this family, and of many other ducal and distinguished houses, is to be found in the renowned Bess of Hardwick—the hard-fisted gaoler of Mary Queen of Scots. To this extraordinary woman may almost be said to be due the creation of the modern Whig aristocracy, and her career in this respect is worthy of a little study. Bess was born in 1520, the daughter of a certain Squire Hardwick, of Hardwick in Derbyshire, one of five sisters, co-heiresses of the family estate; but Bess, in some way or other, got the whole property in the end, and there built the locally-famous Hardwick Hall, which we shall come upon in Derbyshire. Bess began her career by marrying, at the age of fourteen, one Robert Barley or Barlow, who died not many years after, leaving Bess a large jointure. The skilful management of this jointure enabled Bess to ruin the rest of the Barlows and acquire the whole of the Barlow estate, and this occupied her about twelve years, during which time she remained a widow. Then our Elizabeth, being then about seven and twenty years of age, married Sir William Cavendish, and she persuaded Sir William to sell his property, which was in the southern part of England, and join her in her plans of aggrandisement. The pair bought Chatsworth and lived together happily, it seems, for some years, during which Bess brought into the world three sons and three daughters. While Bess had little softness of character, for her children she seems to have felt all the fierce affection of a tigress. Her husband died in 1557, leaving Bess once more a widow at thirty-seven. She had not yet done with matrimony, but henceforth her

marriages seem to have been planned with the sole object of improving her own estate, and the future prospects of her children. Thus she married, without an over-long widowhood, Sir William St. Loe, captain of the guard to Queen Elizabeth, and though they had no children, the captain settled large estates upon her, probably in the way of a bargain that Bess should do the same by him, and, as usual, Bess got the better of the bargain, and the captain of the guard disappears from the scene. Bess was not only hard in disposition but hard in feature, and it must have been her money and not her personal attractions that attracted suitors; but anyhow we now find her sought by the wealthy and distinguished George, Earl of Shrewsbury, himself a widower with grown-up children. Elizabeth, although she prized the title of countess, would not consent to the match except on the condition that his eldest son should marry her youngest daughter, Mary Cavendish, and that her eldest son should marry his daughter, Grace Talbot. This must be held as a lucky compact for the Talbots, as family interests were now bound up together; otherwise Bess, who had no children by this marriage, would no doubt have stripped them of all they had. As it was, she managed to pare off a nice estate or two from their domains for the benefit of the younger Cavendishes. The Earl of Shrewsbury died in 1590, but Bess survived for seventeen years, continually toiling and planning to increase her estates. She bought and sold land, was a builder, a usurer, a farmer, a lead-merchant, and to her commercial aptitude she added the tact of a courtier and the skill of a politician. From her descend at least five lines of ducal descent with many allied families of position. It was Bess in each case who set the ball rolling, and land and honours increased in every case upon the nucleus that Bess had so carefully kneaded together. The one great craze of Bess was building. To account for her fervour in raising up new houses people spoke of a prophecy—or perhaps it was a compact with some uncanny power—to the effect that as long as she kept on building she should go on living. And so at the age of eighty-seven she was building a new house for herself at Owlcotes, when a hard frost came on and stopped the work, and the same killing frost carried off the countess herself. In houses she built, or their successors, and upon the lands she laboriously added together, were established the fortunes of at

least five ducal families—the dukes of Devonshire first of all in direct descent, and by the female line the dukes of Portland, Newcastle, and Norfolk, and the extinct dukes of Kingston, now represented by Earl Manvers.

The third son of Elizabeth of Hardwick inherited Welbeck and Bolsover, and his sons are the Cavendishes of the Civil Wars; the eldest of whom, created by Charles Earl of Newcastle, we have met with as the chivalrous antagonist of Black Tom Fairfax in Yorkshire. A gallant and accomplished nobleman this, who wrote a treatise on horsemanship which was long a text-book for the manège, and who built the fine riding-school at Welbeck, converted by the late duke into a picture-gallery. At Welbeck too, as the guest of this loyal Cavendish, King Charles the First was a visitor on his way to his coronation in Scotland, a visit memorable for the production of a masque for the king's entertainment—a masque called *Love's Welcome*, written it seems for the occasion by Rare Ben Jonson. But the estates of these Cavendishes were brought to the Bentincks in the eighteenth century by Lady Margaret Cavendish Harly, who married the second Duke of Portland—these Bentincks being a Dutch family, it will be remembered, who came over to England in the train of William of Orange. And thus in the late Duke of Portland, with all his cranks and humours, we seem to have a reversion to the character of “building Bess.”

From Welbeck we come without any break in the thread of parks and wooded glades to Clumber, the seat of the dukes of Newcastle, and then pass by the magnificent new palace of the Pierreponts at Thoresby. These great uninhabited regions, traversed only by keepers and servants, give a sense of loneliness, and even of desolation, in spite of the charm of their surroundings. And yet many pretty, secluded villages lie about the margin of this great expanse of aristocratic domain—villages where even yet the May-pole may be found upreared on the village-green. And the traveller comes unexpectedly, too, upon hop-gardens, and may wonder how they got there, who introduced the culture, and when; but he will get little satisfaction for his curiosity in the neighbourhood, where the people seem less courteous and communicative than in the rest of the county.

Still through park-like glades, the

wanderer in Sherwood may find his way to Worksop Manor, a noble site, adorned by splendid timber, once the great seat of the Talbots. The manor was originally acquired by the famous John Talbot, the terror of the French—Shakespeare's Talbot—if, indeed, Shakespeare be responsible for the somewhat windy emptiness of the first part of King Henry the Sixth. Anyhow, Talbot got the manor by marrying the heiress of the ancient house of Furnival, and here their descendants flourished for several centuries, acquiring vast possessions by prudence and wealthy marriages. Here reigned our friend Bess of Hardwick, and here she became the sour and vigilant gaoler of poor Mary Queen of Scots. But the vast manor-house, once crowded with hundreds of servants and retainers, was burnt down in 1761. Long before then, however, the Talbots had disappeared from the scene, as the last heir male of the Worksop Talbots died in 1617, and the title went to a distant branch, with some of the original estates. The vast possessions of the house in York and Nottingham were divided among the heiresses of Gilbert, the seventh earl. One of these daughters—Alethea, to whom Queen Elizabeth had stood as godmother—had married Thomas Howard, afterwards Duke of Norfolk, and thus Worksop Manor becomes connected with that family; and the reigning Duke of Norfolk, it is said, built up the burnt manor-house with much magnificence. But in 1840 the manor was sold to the Duke of Newcastle, who pulled down the greater part of the house and left it in its present dismantled condition.

Worksop itself is a bright and busy little town, with a good deal of Yorkshire energy about it, and is noticeable for its ancient priory church, a good example, what is left of it, of transition Norman architecture. All the chancel, however, has been demolished, and with it the monuments of many generations of Louvetôts, Furnivals, and Talbots, fragments of which, with the mouldering bones they commemorate, are turned up whenever the ground is disturbed.

Farther north lies Blyth in its solitude, with its inns with wide echoing courtyards and rows of deserted stables; with its memories of coaching days, when it was the first stage on the branch-road to the great towns of the West Riding of York; of the Mellersh family, too, and the wild colonel, the companion of the Prince

Regent, who often "tooled" the coach to the gates of his own park, and who brought the whole estate to the hammer in the end. Blyth, too, with its earlier memories enshrined in the venerable Norman nave of its church, that comes upon the beholder with all the impressiveness of surprise from its commonplace exterior. For here was one of the earliest Norman priories, dependent on the Abbey of St. Katherine at Rouen—that St. Katherine on the mount that looks over the whole city and the sinuous folds of the Seine in its mighty valley. Blyth, too, the scene of tournaments and festivals, of royal pomp and feudal splendour—all come to this placid, sleepy quietude.

Then there is Scrooby, about which we have already heard something, as connected with the Puritan emigration. Curiously enough it was the old manor-house of the Archbishops that became the nucleus of the new movement, the manor-house where Wolsey rested after leaving Southwell, just before he was arrested. The old manor-house had been utilised by the Government as a posting-station, and the post-master was the chief man of the little Separatist congregation, and one of the Mayflower emigrants.

We might here hark back to Retford; but the once reedy ford over the river Idle is now a neat little railway town, with no particular history belonging to it. Nor can much be said for Taxford, which has nothing ancient about it but the name, that seems somehow to have got astray from some other place, for there is nothing in the way of a ford, or even of a stream to be forded, discoverable in the neighbourhood. So that we will hie away to the other side of the forest towards Nottingham, where in a valley sheltered from the north by a range of strange-looking hills that bear the name of Robin Hood's Hills, lies the old priory "de novo loco in Sherwood," otherwise Newstead Abbey.

There is little trace of the forest indeed, and coal-mines and manufactures have encompassed Newstead with a veil of smoke, but the old house of the Byrons remains, although in the hands of strangers; and the rooms occupied by the poet are religiously preserved as he left them. The great west window of the priory church survives, "a glorious remnant of the Gothic pile." The chapter-house, too, has survived, and was used as a chapel by the Byrons, but the rest of the church has disappeared, and Boatswain, Byron's

favourite dog, is buried where once stood the high altar. In digging Boatswain's grave a skull was disinterred, no doubt from the position of the interment belonging to some ancient prelate of high sanctity, and this was mounted by Byron as a drinking-cup, and shared in the disorderly revels held by the young lord in the first flush of youth and of possession.

Something sinister and ill-fated in popular estimation hung about the old priory of Newstead, and under the rule of the poet's immediate predecessor, William, the fifth Lord Byron, this sinister influence had deepened. This William, as is well known, had in early life killed a neighbour, young Chaworth, in a tavern brawl in London. But before this event Byron had been in ill odour with the country squires round about. He was no sportsman, and was tender and lenient with poachers—aggravated offences in the eyes of his neighbours—and it was for some delinquency of this kind that Lord Byron was bearded and twitted in a London tavern by the hot-headed and arrogant young squire. Swords were drawn, and Chaworth was slain. Byron was tried by his peers, pleaded his peerage, and was released, but he retired at once to Newstead, and from that time led a life of solitude and seclusion. All kinds of stories were told of his solitary pastimes. He tamed crickets, which would dance about him, and when he died it is said that the crickets left the priory in a body. The harmless figures of satyrs, that watched and still watch over the gardens of Newstead, were called by the country people the old lord's devils, and he was supposed to have special intercourse with the Evil One. Another of the old lord's pastimes was in sailing boats, and in sham fights therein with his servants, on the lakes in the priory grounds—that string of pools which had been the mill-ponds of the old monks—and when he had a sailing-boat brought from the Trent and carted across the forest, the country folk recalled an old prophecy of Mother Shipton, to the effect that, when a ship loaded with ling, or heather, should sail over Sherwood Forest, the Byrons should lose Newstead. And so people ran alongside the boat and flung heather upon it, to help in the fulfilment of the prophecy.

When the old lord died young Byron was living in Scotland with his mother, who had been the well-to-do heiress of the

Gordons of Gight, but who had seen all her property disappear within a year of her marriage, to pay the debts previously incurred by her wild and reckless husband, Captain Byron. A barepittance of a hundred and fifty pounds a year had been secured her, upon which she had to live and educate her son, who was eleven years old when the old lord died, and he succeeded to the heritage of the Byrons. And then mother and son came to live at Nottingham. Newstead was let by the boy's guardians during his minority to Lord Grey de Rathyn, but still mother and son liked to hover about the family seat. It was some old gossip of his mother's, an old lady with peculiar notions as to the future of the human soul, who suggested the first effort of his muse—pretty well in verse and metre for a boy of twelve or so :

In Nottingham county there lives at Swan Green
As curst an old lady as ever was seen,
And when she does die, which I hope will be soon,
She firmly believes she will go to the moon.

When a little older, we find Lord Byron a frequent guest of the Greys at his own ancestral home, and here he met with Miss Chaworth, of the same family as the Chaworth killed by the old lord—the Mary of his Dream, the object of one of the earliest and perhaps the strongest of his many loves. "How can you think that I should care for that lame boy?" Miss Chaworth was heard to say, and young Byron rode off with all the pangs of wounded love and pride. But Miss Chaworth had fixed her heart on another kind of hero—Jack Musters, a ruddy fox-hunting squire—and perhaps she was wise in her generation. Instead of sharing the storm and strife of such a life as Byron's, she passed existence placidly as a county dame, with her church, her blanket-club, her dinner-parties, and her whist, while Jack Musters prosecuted poachers, and fought them too—for his fight with the sweep is still remembered in the land, when Jack Musters met his match for once, and, so far from resenting his beating, brought his antagonist home to give him a glass of wine and a guinea. One wonders whether Mary Chaworth poured out the glass of wine and bound up her lord's contusions with vinegar and brown-paper.

THE AUTUMN MESSAGE.

SHE gathered the dark-blue violets
That hid 'neath their dewy leaves,
And gave to the sighing autumn winds
The fragrance of April eves.

She chose the pale pure rosebud
That drooped its pensive head,
Where the great birch swung above it,
All russet, and gold, and red.

She sought for the fragile beauty,
That grows 'neath the hothouse panes,
Whose blossom, although it withers,
For ever its scent retains.

She whispered a word to the flowers,
And softly their leaves caressed,
And she sent them to carry her message,
To him whom she loved the best.

"MR. OUT-YOU-GO."

THERE is a very widespread impression to the effect that the life—the business life, that is—of an official of any public department is a pleasant and easy one. That impression may or may not be generally justifiable, but if it is, I can answer for it that this rule, like others, has its exceptions. I am in a public department, but my official lines have not fallen unto me in pleasant places. I merely mention the circumstance, however; I am not a man with a grievance, or, at any rate, I am not at present bent on grievance mongering. I refer to my "lines" here, simply because their falling where they do accounts for my knowledge of, and acquaintance with, Mr. Out-You-Go, a personage of a stamp not at all likely to be found in the pleasanter places of the earth, and whose ways are certainly not ways of pleasantness. In my official capacity I am in immediate and active charge of a certain poor district of the metropolis which is commonly—and with good cause—spoken of as a warm quarter. Its streets are narrow except as to gutter, in which they are abnormally broad, and foul. Narrowness, however, like most other things, is relative, and though compared with those of better localities, these streets are narrow, they figure as stately thoroughfares in comparison with the alleys, open and blind, of which the district is largely made up. These alleys are styled rows, rents, buildings, courts, squares, and even gardens. As a matter of fact they are veritable slums, and of slums, slummy; the sort of places to give a more realistic idea of what Alsatia must have been like than even the graphic word-painting of the great Sir Walter. In streets and alleys alike, the houses are old, dilapidated, vermin-infested, and over-inhabited, and altogether the district is in a champion state of unsanitariness. The relieving-officer, the parish doctor, the parish fever and small-pox vans, and the parish hearse, find much of

their employment in it. There is a little Ireland within its gates, and its faction-fights, free fights, wife-beatings, and miscellaneous scimmages furnish a constant supply of more or less interesting surgical cases to the neighbouring hospital. The district is "well known to the police," but save to them, the officers mentioned above, and its inhabitants, it is a terra incognita. More than one of these inhabitants is a "bit of a character" in his, or in her, way, but the great man of mark, the Triton among minnows in the way of characters, is Mr. Out-You-Go.

Though a Post Office Directory would furnish many as outlandish and strangely compounded a name, any reader acquainted with the extent to which nicknames and nicknaming prevail in low quarters, will probably guess that Out-You-Go is not the veritable surname of the local notable here in question. He is, however, very rarely spoken of, and in many instances is not even known, by any other, and the "natives" will as emphatically as slangily inform you that if Out-You-Go is not his name, it is undoubtedly his nature. Though well known, it cannot be said of him he is highly respected. As the chief tenement landlord of the district, he is on a small scale a sort of uncrowned king, but he certainly does not reign in the hearts of his subjects, who are wont to say of him that he has no heart, but only a paving-stone where his heart should be. His kingship does not arise simply from his being an owner of tenement-houses, but from that fact taken in conjunction with the circumstances that, unlike other tenement landlords, he is resident on his estate, and acts as his own agent. Most hired agents engaged in the management of tenement property are content to let house by house, leaving the tenants in chief to manage the subletting at their own risk if they fail, to find lodgers, to their own profit if they succeed. Not so Mr. Out-You-Go, however, who as a landlord is nothing if not thorough. He lets direct to each occupant of a one or two roomed tenement, and fixes their rents, which he collects from them individually. Above all, he personally carries out evictions from his property. This is the most distinguishing feature of his management, and it is in connection with it that he has earned his sobriquet. "Out-You-Go" is his war-cry in the battle of eviction, which is more or less constantly being waged between tenement landlords and tenants. That is

the slogan with which he sets on when about to seize the "sticks" and resume possession—forcibly if need be—of the rooms of any defaulting tenant who has not cleared out in accordance with the notice to quit, which is promptly served on the first failure to pay the weekly rent. In this matter he is a law unto himself, and he carries out his rule in a highly draconic spirit. His "simple plan," though effective, is said, and probably with truth, to be illegal, but he has little to apprehend on that score. His tenantry are too poor, and occasionally too "shady," to care to invoke the law's delay, and a little delay is all they could hope to gain. Being a stalwart and determined fellow, and having had a long and varied experience in "rough and tumble" work, Mr. Out-You-Go has even less to fear from physical resistance than legal impediments. So, like the ancient mariner, he hath his will—in these latter days at any rate. But it was not ever thus. In the early days of his landlordism he literally fought and bled for the establishment of his methods. He fought simply for his own hand, but in winning the fight he perforce became a social reformer. The reformer, like the prophet, however, does not always obtain honour in his own country, and so it has been with the redoubtable Out-You-Go.

Tenement-houses in poor quarters are by no means invariably the highly remunerative property they are popularly supposed to be. Fully let to regularly paying tenants, they may be relatively a more profitable investment than West End mansions, but their tenants are not always paying ones. Among this class of tenantry is a section usually spoken of as "Slopers," who without going through any formality or farce of issuing manifestoes, act upon no-rent principles with a thoroughness that would gladden the heart of a Land Leaguer—provided he was not their landlord. The sloper will neither pay nor go. His furniture consists for the most part of a frying-pan, a bundle of shavings and rags by way of bed and bedding, and a few battered beer-cans. Such goods are of course not worth seizing, and a tenant of this stamp is not to be got rid of by any milder means than the unroofing of the house or the removal of its windows. Even such costly proceedings as these will not always have the desired effect. Moreover, your sloper is generally a brutal ruffian who with horrid imprecations threatens—and may fulfil his threats—to assault any

person who may attempt to resort to these extreme means of eviction. A gang of these hard bargains had firmly established themselves in the half-dozen houses with which Mr. Out-You-Go commenced his career as a landlord. The proceedings of the slopers had so depreciated the value of these particular houses that they were sold at so low a price, and under such favourable conditions of deferred payments, that Mr. Out-You-Go, though only a jobbing bricklayer at the time, was enabled to purchase them. His work as a jobbing-hand had consisted chiefly in undertaking such repairs as are bestowed upon tenement-houses, so that he knew the neighbourhood, not merely by reputation, but by experience also. He was fully aware of the reason that led to the houses being knocked down—by the auctioneer—so cheaply, and deliberately accepted the situation. He openly announced his intention of clearing out the slopers when he should come into possession, while the slopers as openly and with their most blood-curdling oaths proclaimed their resolution not to be cleared out, and to "make it hot" for anyone who should attempt to eject them. The position was quite an interesting one for the locality generally, and both landlords and tenantry watched with eager curiosity for the commencement of hostilities. They were not kept long in suspense. Within a week of his entering upon the ownership of his property, Mr. Out-You-Go that was to be—for at that time he had not gained the title—marched into the apartment of a notorious corner-man and bully, who was the head and front of this particular gang of offending slopers, and demanded to have either his room or his rent. To this demand the tenant replied by advising him to get out if he did not want to be "corpsed." As he showed no signs of acting upon this advice, he was next recommended to say his prayers, if he knew any, as he had not got five minutes to live, and then the bully went for him on "corpsing" purpose bent. But he had "woke the wrong passenger." Out-You-Go, who worked hard and lived temperately, was muscular as well as big, and—though the other did not know it—a fair bruiser. He met the corner-man's ugly rush with a swinging shoulder hit which sent him from the top to the bottom of a flight of stairs, with his face a good deal "bashed in." Whether or not this bully was a coward, he certainly acted upon the principle that discretion is the

better part of valour. Finding he had caught a Tartar, he affected to have been "knocked silly," until his foeman had gone away. Taught by this incident that their new landlord was not to be intimidated by any mere "gassing" in the way of threats or even by attempts at personal violence, the slopers changed their tactics. They barricaded themselves in the houses and carried the war into the enemy's country by proceeding to wreck his property. The sloper is at best a destructive as well as a non-paying tenant. He generally belongs to the class of rough who after priming himself with unlimited pots of "Saturday night particular," indulges in wife-beating and—furniture in his case being scarce—door and window smashing.

The right of the British husband to do what he liked with his own, Mr. Out-You-Go was in a general way prepared to respect. With regard to wife-beating, he avowedly acted upon a strict policy of non-intervention, but if the beater did not in his turn respect the sacred rights of (house) property, then was the bold Out-You-Go down upon him like a thousand of bricks.

In his first battle with the slopers he had ample cause to be down upon them on this head. They carried house-smashing to its utmost limits, and that not merely incidentally to the excitement of wife-beating, but deliberately and as an act of war. Doors and stair-banisters were pulled down and ostentatiously chopped up for firewood, and in some instances mantel-pieces and fire-grates were dismounted and thrown out of window. The perpetrators of this destruction were men of straw so far as any hope of exacting compensation from them went. On this ground, others had let such tenants alone, but Out-You-Go was resolved that in this case they should pay in person. One of them, whom he managed to seize red-handed, he "charged," and others, though they strictly secluded themselves, he ferreted out and had taken on warrants. In this work he displayed an energy and courage that not only disgusted the slopers, but likewise astonished the police authorities. He prosecuted to the bitter end, and finally succeeded in "lumbering" some half-dozen of the more joyous and original spirits among the house-wreckers, one of whom was sentenced to three months' "hard," and the others to periods varying from seven days to a month. This gave pause to the remaining roughs.

If the pastime of house-smashing could be indulged in without risk, they argued, well and good, they were free, able, and willing to be "on the job," but to be lumbered for it, to have to do time for it, was "up another street." For a free-born Briton to be liable to get six months for merely ill-treating his wife was sufficiently hard lines, but that it should also be possible to "put him away" for house-wrecking was altogether too bad. Under such conditions—and against a man capable of making these conditions operative—this particular body of slopers came to the conclusion that the game was not worth the candle.

On the day after their fellows had been sentenced they gave in, and, calling a parley with their formidable landlord, speedily agreed to his terms of marching out on condition of being allowed to take their baggage—such as it was—with them.

Having thus got rid of his band of squatters, Mr. Out-You-Go put the houses in repair, and let them again to tenants of his own choosing. Even then he got some relatively undesirable customers to deal with, but upon them he immediately swooped down with his war-cry, and from that time forward he continued to act strictly on the out-you-go principle. With him the just suffered for, or at least with, the unjust. A tenant was to him a tenant and nothing more. The one who pleaded with him for time might be a man who had spent the rent in drink, or a wife with a sick husband on her hands, or a widow temporarily out of employment. But for all alike he had the same answer—"the room or the rent—pay, or out you go." And with him the word and the deed were as one; if they did not pay out they were put, and in very summary fashion.

Apart from his harshness in this matter, Mr. Out-You-Go came to be accounted a passably good landlord. His rents were not above the average rate; he kept the houses in reasonable repair—for tenement-houses; and was accommodating in the matter of making up or splitting up a tenement to suit occupiers. He did all repairs with his own hands, and in every other respect worked with characteristic vigour in his office of landlord, and from his own point of view he had his reward. Within a year he had made his first batch of houses a paying concern, even allowing for his war expenditure at the outset. On the strength of his

achievement, the management of other tenement-house properties in the vicinity was offered to him, but he would accept no agencies. His desire was to extend his own possessions, not to improve the value of those of others—even for a consideration. As such properties came into the market he “snapped them up,” sometimes by single houses, sometimes by whole alleys or rows. At first he had to finance his operations in this kind, but ere long he was in a position to buy right away and right out. Under his Shylockian system of management the wretched dwellings of the poorest of the poor—dwellings that, under a really effective Dwellings Improvement Act, would have been swept away as unfit for human habitation—became a mine of wealth to him. In the course of a few years he was, so far as means went, in a position to have moved to the fashionable quarter of the suburb in the low quarter of which his property was situated. Nor was he altogether without inclination to display his wealth. But, as a matter of business, he argues that it pays him best to stay where he can keep his eye and his hand upon his tenants; where, if need be, he can come down like a wolf on the fold, if he detects or suspects an intention upon the part of any of them to bolt. This is the key-note to his residential position, as he understands it, and, under all the circumstances of the case, he certainly makes the best of the position. His dwelling stands out as an oasis of sweetness and light in a desert of dirt and misery. It is a fair-sized corner-house, which, before he came to inhabit it, had accommodated at least half-a-dozen tenement families. It has been “done up” to an extent, and with a frequency, that almost amount to rebuilding. Its outer brickwork has been faced and pointed, and its door and window frames are brightly painted and glossily varnished, and within it is expensively and, if not tastefully, at any rate gorgeously furnished. The young Out-You-Gos—a son of twenty, and two daughters, aged respectively seventeen and eighteen—are, despite their surroundings, of decidedly genteel proclivities. They have personal acquaintances in the genteel world, even visiting acquaintances who, to the end of cultivating social relations with them, brace themselves to brave the dangers of the low quarter. To those not acclimatised, there really are sanitary dangers involved in such an incursion; but the danger most apprehended—that, namely, of rough treatment

from the inhabitants of the quarter—is, to a great extent, imaginary. True, the natives will stare at you with an unembarrassed but embarrassing frankness; they will chaff you in language so slangy as only to be understood of those to the manner born, or so coarse as to grate on ears polite; or they may jeer at you, or, in extreme cases, hoot you. Their aggressiveness, generally speaking, has this extent, no more. Of course, if the genteel incursionist is so unwise as to make an ostentatious display of watch-guard, or other easily get-at-able jewellery, some weak brother—or even sister—of the quarter may be tempted to “do a snatch;” but, as a rule, the “foreigner” who exercises a reasonable degree of tact and temper need fear no personal violence at the hands of the natives.

Altogether a social explorer, venturing into low latitudes and coming upon the home of the Out-You-Gos, would probably be reminded of the fly in the amber, and wonder how it got there. Having regard to the shady character of the neighbourhood, another matter for wonder with a stranger would doubtless be that the house did not get “burgled.” As the no-visible-means-of-support classes abound in the locality, it would be doing it no injustice to suppose that it is very much on the cards that it numbers members of the enterprising burglar profession among its inhabitants, or, in any case, some who would be willing enough to “put up a job” for gentlemen of the burgling craft hailing from other quarters. That Mr. Out-You-Go’s dwelling has been taken stock of, with a view to burglarious operations, may be pretty safely assumed, and therein, doubtless, lies its safety.

The burglar of the period does not work at random. As a rule he is informed of the circumstances likely to arise in connection with a job, before undertaking it, and the circumstances in the case of Mr. Out-You-Go’s house are not such as to inspire confidence of success or hopes of a booty worth running special risk for. His habits and customs in relation to burgling possibilities are matter of common knowledge in the district. It is known that his doors and windows are well secured, that he banks close up, and every night deposits his cash-box and portable valuables in a safe. A formidably fierce bull-dog is at nightfall turned loose in the yard, and a cur of an unascertainable mixture of breeds,

but a prize yelper when roused, does sentinel duty within doors. Further, it is known that Mr. Out-You-Go keeps a loaded revolver handy, and by those who are acquainted with him it is not for an instant doubted that in the event of a burglary he would use it unhesitatingly, and that with no mere purpose to frighten, but with full intent and hope to bring down his man or men, not caring whether he brought them down dead or only wounded. These are conditional circumstances calculated to appeal to the business and bosoms of burglars, and to them Mr. Out-You-Go owes it that his home is as safe as any other in the district.

Once, in the early days of his landlordism, an attempt was made to rob him as he was returning home from a Monday rent-collection. On that occasion a couple of determined roughs tried to drag from him the hand-bag in which he carried his money, but they only so far succeeded that the bag was jerked open, part of its contents thrown about, and a pound or two in silver "grabbed"—the mob that had gathered round, however, getting more of the money than the desperadoes who had made the attack. The latter personages made good their escape for the time being, but three months later returned to the district, hoping the affair had blown over. In this they reckoned very much without their host. Out-You-Go gained early intelligence of their return, and immediately put the police upon their track, whereupon they fled again, and that time finally, a lesson that was not lost upon the local brotherhood of roughs. From that time Mr. Out-You-Go has well safeguarded himself against the probability of any second attack of the kind. It was then that he set up his bulldog.

The money-bag he now carries is of a special make, and is snap-locked. It is slung round his shoulders by a stout strap, and fastened to his side by a steel chain, and with the bag thus secured, a significantly stout walking-stick in his hand, and the dog following at heel, he has little to apprehend. In these latter days he goes on his round feared, but fearing none. Knowing the habits and means of his tenantry, he does not begin business till eleven o'clock on the Monday morning, by which hour those of them who are under the necessity—as a good many of them are—of "making the money" at the pawnbroker's, will have had time to transact their affairs in that kind.

However the rent may be raised it is usually ready for him when he calls, in many instances being left with children to hand over, both parents being out at work or looking for it. Occasionally, Out-You-Go may be heard laying down the law to a tenant who is not prepared with the rent, for his laying down is done loudly and emphatically, so that all may hear and be warned. Saturday afternoon is his time for making evictions, but he has become such an expert at the work, it is so well-known that resistance will not avail, and the "sticks," to be confiscated are usually of such small value, that his "chuckings out" have come to be regarded as quite commonplace incidents, and hardly attract as much attention as a wife-beating, or a fight between two drunken men or women, would do.

It may be asked why do tenants, knowing what he is, live under such a landlord? Well, practically, it is a case of Hobson's choice. This, like most other tenement districts, is habitually overcrowded. The demand for rooms exceeds the supply, and Out-You-Go is the largest holder. The position is, on many points, a case of the fitness of things. The rents, though relatively high, are positively low. The locality lies handy to the labour-markets in which "cas'alty" labourers have their best chances of finding employment, and tenants are allowed to carry on indoor trades that they would not be permitted to follow in a better class of dwellings. Again, the shady social atmosphere of the quarter suits the complaint of the no-visible-means-of-support section of its inhabitants. Moreover, as already mentioned, apart from the fact that he is a man of one idea—rent—Mr. Out-You-Go is not a bad landlord. Nay, there are those who consider him on some points a good one. He is not "too blessed particular" as to character, indeed character is a thing of which his philosophy of landlordism takes no account. He selects his tenants entirely on his own judgment, and directs that judgment solely to the question, Are they likely to be good payers? How the means to pay may be obtained he regards as no business of his. References he avowedly despises, but he loses little by his contempt for them, seeing that the customary reference among tenement-occupiers is a dilapidated, dog's-eared rent-book, which is probably doctored, and possibly wholly fabricated. The difficulty with any owner of tenement-

property in the low quarters of the metropolis is not to obtain tenants, but to get in rents. That difficulty, as we have seen, Mr. Out-You-Go has overcome, and, to his mind, the means by which he has conquered are more than justified by the circumstance that they have been successful.

Of course Mr. Out-You-Go poses as a self-made man. Most who know him regard him as being an ugly job at that, and hope that the mould was broken after he was cast. But like a good many other self-made men, Mr. Out-You-Go adores his maker. Hard he is as the nether millstone, and grinds the faces of the poor, but he has thriven and thrives, and "lives a prosperous gentleman," in his own estimation at least. There are, no doubt, redeeming points in his character, but on the whole he is, like Lady Clara Vere de Vere—though, of course, on different grounds—not one to be desired. Taken for all in all, however, he is decidedly a character, and considered in conjunction with his surroundings, and as affording incidental illustration of some phases of the life of low quarters, he becomes a fairly interesting study in sociology.

MARRIAGE IN AMERICA.

A FRENCHMAN, asserting that in no civilised country was marriage treated so lightly as in the United States, justified the assertion thus: "In order to make marriage valid the law does not require the consent of parents, or publication, or the presence of witnesses, or even the signatures of the man and woman themselves. A man hunts up an official, says that his name is so and so, and that he wishes to marry such or such a woman. He receives a license—that is, a paper containing the names of the future spouses, who are, in all probability, perfectly unknown to the official. Then the man and woman go before a justice of the peace, or a minister of any sect, in any corner of the United States, and declare that the names in the license are their names; the justice or minister gets up, pronounces them married, signs the license, and pockets his fee. That is the whole process."

Even that much is unnecessary in the Empire State, where, according to a late decision, persons may marry themselves by words none but themselves hear; or without any verbal ceremony whatever, by publicly living together as man and wife.

Aspirants to matrimony who do not care to forge their own bonds may enlist the services of any minister of religion, any mayor, recorder, or alderman; any county judge or justice of the peace, according as their fancy inclines. Very accommodating, too, are the authorities of New York City. Couples electing to be married at the City Hall have a choice of ritual. If an alderman officiates, he asks the bride: "Do you take this man as your wedded husband, to live together in the state of matrimony? Will you love, comfort, honour, and obey him, as a faithful wife is bound to do, in health and sickness, prosperity and adversity, and forsaking all others, keep you alone with him, so long as you both shall live?" If the mayor ties the knot he omits the word "obey," and calls upon the bride to "keep" her husband instead. This alteration was made some few years ago by Mayor Havemeyer, and when his successor was asked to return to the old formula, he replied: "What's the use of putting it back? You know that a woman wouldn't mind it after she was married. Ask a wife to obey, indeed! I don't want to get such trouble as that on my head."

Loving at sight is possible anywhere, in the States marrying at sight is as feasible an operation. A comely maiden, fresh from old England, bound for her brother's home in the West, broke her journey at Pittsburg, to call upon a cousin residing at Mount Washington. While making her way thither, she stumbled against a stalwart puddler coming from the opposite direction. He apologised for the accidental collision, a conversation ensued, ending in his accompanying her to her cousin's house, leaving her there to go in quest of a minister, and finding one, the acquaintances of an hour were bound together for life. Mr. Martin, on his way to Jonesville to marry Miss Foster, chancing to meet an old sweetheart, forgot his new one, and straightway went and married his first love, leaving Miss Foster to explain matters to the bridal guests with the best grace she could. Thomas Patterson, a mere boy, arraigned at Frontin, New Jersey, for refusing to support his forty-year-old wife and her four children, on being asked how he came to give her the right of expecting him to do so, replied: "Why, squire, I was so blind drunk that I didn't know what I was doing. I was arrested the same night for being drunk, and have never lived with the woman at all!" The judge enquired what answer he made to the

interrogation, "Will you take this woman to be thy lawful wedded wife?" Said the lad: "Another round of drinks, landlord!"

When matrimony can be perpetrated in such haphazard fashion it is not surprising to find a witness deposing that she could not tell her husband's birthplace or nationality, was utterly ignorant of his character or career, and did not know if he had a relation in the world; as she pithily put it, she had "simply married him, and that was all." Possibly she had no reason to be ashamed of her choice, which is more than could be said of the young woman who stayed the removal of a prisoner from the dock by exclaiming: "Wait a minute, judge, we want your honour to marry us!" The man nodded assent, the judge did the needful, the girl received her husband's first kiss, and bade him farewell for twelve months—the term of his sentence. Had she spoken sooner she might not have had to wait so long for the honeymoon. When one McKinney was charged with killing the father of a girl he had betrayed, he pleaded he had shot the old man in self-defence, and proclaimed his readiness to marry the cause of the mischance. On that understanding, the jury acquitted him, and the judge then and there made the murderer and the murdered man's daughter a wedded, if not a happy couple.

An engaged pair were sauntering through the Capitol at Columbus when the gentleman suddenly suggested that they might as well bring their courtship to its proper ending on the spot. The lady was nothing loth, a clergyman was quickly found, and fortified by the presence of the governor, attorney-general, treasurer, auditor, adjutant-general, and sundry other state officials, "while the dim religious light was stealing through the apex of the dome, the groom and bride stood upon the central star in the mosaic pavement, and were united in the holy bonds of matrimony."

Not a few of our American cousins appear to dislike humdrum weddings as heartily as Miss Lydia Languish herself, and show it by indulging in eccentricities never dreamed of in that romantic damsel's philosophy. Noting the increase in remote rural districts of marriages on horseback, a journalist says the advantages of the new mode are obvious. While the clergyman is closing his eyes to pronounce the nuptial benediction, the happy couple can stick spurs in their chargers and vanish with-

out paying the fee, unless, being posted in the ways of the country, the minister conducts the service with his trusty shotgun at his side. Gallopers into matrimony, however, have been surpassed in originality. Among the announcements one morning in the Omaha Republican was to be read: "Cox—Harrington.—Married on the east half of the north-west quarter of section twenty-two; township twenty-one; north of range eleven east, in an open sleigh, and under an open and unclouded canopy, by Rev. J. F. Mason, James B., only son of John Cox, of Colorado, and Ellen C., eldest daughter of Mayor O. Harrington, of Burt County, Nebraska." Central Park was, a few years ago, the scene of a balloon marriage, an aerial performance imitated by a Pittsburg pair, who, after getting rid of the alderman who made them one, went on a short bridal excursion two thousand feet above the earth's level. A silly freak, no doubt, in the opinion of that other fond pair, who ventured nine miles underground that they might be married in the Mammoth Cave.

Some time in 1881 two ladies and two gentlemen, all hailing from Boston, arrived at the Manitou House, Colorado, and engaged the Rev. Dr. J. E. Smith to go with them next day to the summit of Pike's Peak, and there unite Mr. Dutton and Miss Nellie Throcmorton in wedlock. At six in the morning the party, mounted on bronchos, started from the hotel, but had not got far on their way before the animal the minister bestrode rid himself of his burden by pitching his rider over a bridge into the river beneath. He was quickly brought to land, but was not to be induced to risk his neck again. It was then arranged that he should make for the telegraph-office at Colorado Springs, and do his spiriting by wire. By noon the wedding-party had reached their destination, and the sergeant in charge of the signal station there at once telegraphed their arrival to the reverend gentleman, waiting ten thousand feet below. The young people joined hands and stood before the sergeant, the father and mother of the bride standing on either side, and the sergeant at the instrument read the questions of the clergyman as they came thrilling through the wires, and sent back the answers of bride and bridegroom, until up from the valley to that small stone keep, fourteen thousand feet above the ocean, came that message making two hearts one: "Then I pronounce you man and wife."

In another case of marriage by telegraph, the lady stood by the minister's side at Portland, while the necessary questions and responses were transmitted to and from the gentleman at Albany, the ceremony lasting exactly thirty minutes.

The laws of Virginia forbid a minor marrying without the consent of his or her parents. A young fellow of twenty wanted to wed a damsel of sixteen, but her step-father declared she was "ower young to marry yet," and, to keep her out of harm's way, resolved to take her out West. By a curious coincidence the lover happened to be at the station at Harper's Ferry, with a marriage license and a minister, when the train carrying his lady-love came in. The old gentleman went into the telegraph-office with his step-daughter. While he was writing a message, a negro boy tapped at the window, the girl stepped outside into her lover's arms. They hurried off to an hotel, and leaving her there, the young rascal went to see what the cruel parent was about. He found him standing on the bridge over the Potomac, looking vainly for the errant maid. A little while later a boat containing a young man, a young girl, and a minister might have been seen in the middle of the river. It was seen by the old gentleman, who wondered what was going on below, until a bystander informed him a couple were getting married; when he owned himself beaten, and the whole party took the next train for home.

More exciting was the runaway match of Miss Ollie Brown and Mr. Joseph Carpenter, of Scottsville, Kentucky. Calling one morning at his sweetheart's house, Carpenter asked her mother to consent to an early wedding. Mrs. Brown was not to be persuaded. Turning to Miss Ollie, he enquired whether she would mind her mother or go with him. "I'll go with you," was the response of the fourteen-year-old chit. Without more ado, he took her in his arms, carried her out of the house, put her into a buggy, was by her side in a moment, and off with all speed for Tennessee. As soon as she recovered from her surprise, the mother hurried for aid, and Mr. Manian, judge of the police-court, mounted a good horse and went in pursuit, and caught the runaways just across the State line; but not before the marriage ceremony had commenced. His intervention sufficed to stay proceedings. "We'll go farther," said the would-be bridegroom; "get into the buggy again, my dear." The lady obeyed. "Now, my dear judge," said

he, "you may prepare for another race, we're off for Gallatin." The distance was eighteen miles, and the lover-laden buggy got the best of the start, but for four miles it was a neck-and-neck race. Then Manian's horse cast a shoe, and fell exhausted, while the buggy went rejoicing on its way. The judge picked himself up, walked three miles, procured another horse, and galloped on, arriving in Gallatin just in time to hear Mr. and Mrs. Carpenter congratulated by the guests at the principal hotel there, and to have nothing left him to do but give the newly-wedded pair his good wishes.

John Schober, a young fellow plying the awl in New York, courted Mary Ann Lipscomb all unknown to her sire, who hated John because he was his father's son. One evening the lovers were caught chatting in the street, and Lipscomb took Mary Ann home, and locked her in her bedroom. However, she contrived to communicate with her swain, and agreed to meet him at the house of a Lutheran minister the following Thursday to be made Mrs. Schober. The appointed time came, but no Mary Ann; so taking two friends with him, John went to Lipscomb's house, broke open the door, and while his friends held her father, ran off with the girl to the minister's abode. He was not at home, and when another was hunted up he declined to have anything to do with the affair, on the ground that the bride-expectant was too young. Almost at their wits' end the lovers made for the Bowery. There Schober descried a "bob-tail car," and in it a gentleman in black wearing a white cravat. Without hesitation the desperate young shoemaker accosted him with:

"This is my betrothed, we want to get married right away; you must marry us here on the spot!"

"What, in this car?" gasped the astonished man, proceeding to advance several objections to such a procedure; objections met by the presentation of a five-dollar bill. There was no resisting that argument, so he did as he was bid, writing the marriage-certificate in pencil on an old bill-head Schober happened to have in his pocket.

So long as they can pay the accustomed fee, runaway couples need seldom go far to find some one willing to marry them. Even Louis Badgley and Josephine Howard, aged respectively fourteen and fifteen years, whose united worldly wealth amounted to

a trade dollar, contrived to get married, thanks to some sympathising spectators subscribing the additional fifty cents demanded by the minister—a worthy brother of the clergyman who did the like office for a boy of fourteen and a girl of thirteen, at the request of the bridegroom's father!

After marriage comes divorce, but with that unpleasant subject we do not care to deal. Suffice it to say that American legislators have shown themselves quite as desirous of helping people out of, as into matrimony, their efforts in the first-named direction being so heartily appreciated that in 1882 over four thousand five hundred cases, resulting in the dissolution of eighteen hundred marriages, were tried in Ohio alone. Divorce, indeed, is becoming so common that some people are asking if the "simultaneous polygamy" in vogue in Utah is a worse thing than the "consecutive polygamy" practised elsewhere. It is only fair to mention that the law of divorce differs considerably in different States; but this hardly mends the matter, indeed, it only confuses things. Says an American lady lecturer: "A man who has been married, divorced, and re-married, will, in travelling from Maine to Florida, find himself sometimes a bachelor, sometimes married to his first wife, sometimes married to his second wife, sometimes a divorced man, and sometimes a bigamist, according to the statutes of the State through which he is travelling."

JENIFER.

BY ANNIE THOMAS (MRS. PENDER-CUDLIP).

CHAPTER XXX. A FORTUNATE DELAY.

MRS. HATTON'S affairs were progressing favourably. As soon as the Rays left her—Jenifer for the "happier sphere" of married life, old Mrs. Ray for the brilliant position of superfluous mother-in-law in her son-in-law's house—the enterprising little lady set herself to work to get out of reach, out of ear-shot, of her current surroundings.

She really loved her faithful old servant, Ann. But the faithful old servant was not so soothing to Mrs. Hatton as she had been in former days. She had developed a rebuking spirit on two or three occasions, and if there was one unpleasant thing in life which Mrs. Hatton could less well endure than another, it was the being rebuked. Ann also became disagreeably

inquisitive as to her mistress's "intentions" for the future.

"Why shouldn't you and I go away and live in some pleasant little country place, where no one would trouble about us, mum?" she would ask. "I don't want wages, and you'll not get anyone to wait on you as I do."

This was true, and Mrs. Hatton felt it. At the same time, she wanted to free herself from these living trammels, for she was as much afraid of Ann as Ann was afraid for her.

Mrs. Hatton matured her plans well before she communicated them to Ann. It really was Mrs. Hatton's desire to get away, far from the scenes of uncertainty in which she had regretted her unhappy married life, and amid fresh woods and pastures new, lead a fresh, novel, unhackneyed, innocent, useful life. But this she felt she could not do, poor little woman, if any of the old faces were about her. So she found a good home for Ann, without consulting that independent-minded female, and having done that, she found one for herself.

A gentleman of seventy, residing on his own estate, Kildene in Kerry, advertised for a lady-housekeeper. Mrs. Hatton applied for the post, got it, on condition she could give satisfactory references, and forthwith wrote off to Mr. Boldero for the latter.

"DEAR JOHN,—A charming opportunity has arisen for your benefiting the poor widow once more. Since our dear friends have left me, mine is a lonely life. Your having agreed to taking Ann as your housekeeper has relieved me of a great responsibility. However great my poverty, I could never have turned that faithful friend adrift in the world. I have answered an advertisement, and got a situation in Ireland. At least I shall get it, if you will kindly send a testimonial for me to Admiral Tullamore, Kildare, County Kerry."

In reply to this, Mr. Boldero wrote, warmly applauding her for her indefatigable and independent spirit, and sent such a testimonial to her many merits as induced Admiral Tullamore to engage her at once.

She found a good welcome awaiting her when she arrived. The gallant old officer was built on the lines of a little barrel, but a chivalrous soul animated that body to which had come that "too much" of itself

so touchingly foreseen in the "coming by-and-by" in *Patience*; and the lady who had come over the sea to make his declining years comfortable in the capacity of house-keeper was received with exactly the same courtesy and consideration which he would have shown to a countess.

Kildene was a capital example of a resident Irish landlord's estate—the house itself well-repaired, well drained and ventilated, well-furnished, and standing in well-kept grounds that kept half-a-dozen gardeners in constant employ, and paid all its expenses with the contents of one huge hot-house, in which grapes and peaches carried on a rivalry for size, flavour, and general splendour.

And the demesne of Kildene was in keeping with the house and its ornamental grounds. Remunerative-looking droves of the little black Kerry cows made the Kildene dairy-produce famous, and brought in a fair income to their owner. All the farms on the estate were in flourishing order, and gave constant employment, by which they could live without committing burglary or murder, to all the labourers who could at all claim to be sons of its soil. Game was plentiful on the estate, though Admiral Tullamore had never prosecuted a poacher.

In a very few days the clever little woman had established herself at Kildene as if she had been born to dwell there. The household was a very efficient one, but she found out the way to dispense with one or two servants, without dispensing with service. Now, few men are blind to their own interests, and this style of retrenchment—though he had not thought it necessary to retrench hitherto—pleased him well. His table was as well supplied as ever, but in the servants' hall murmurs were heard to the effect that if Mrs. Hatton thought they were going to live on pig and potatoes she would awake one morning to find herself mistaken.

But in the end it was they who awoke to the fact that they were mistaken in supposing Mrs. Hatton would ever give them a chance of pointing out a flaw in her to Admiral Tullamore.

The old sailor had his weaknesses. We all have them. One of his was to be affectionate in a fatherly way to every woman who would permit him to be so—to every woman, at least, who was plump, and personable, and pleasing. Mrs. Hatton allowed him to gratify this paternal instinct by

sitting on a stool at his feet on wet evenings, and listening with rapt attention to his rather verbose accounts of the dangers he had run in action. After a time, the servants dared not even to snigger to themselves about her "little game." One unfortunate, who had enjoyed innumerable privileges at Kildene for many years, ventured to sneer at the new rule, and received such dire and immediate punishment for her mistake that she became a terrible warning to the others.

It happened in this wise. The privileged and arrogant old servant, having been told off to wait upon the new lady-housekeeper, "drew the line" at bringing Mrs. Hatton the glass of new milk in the morning to which she looked forward healthfully.

"Such airs! A glass of new milk in the mornin'!" the old servant said scornfully.

But she repented herself of her remark when in her presence it was repeated to the admiral by Mrs. Hatton, with this extenuating rider:

"You see, I think milk in the morning a better thing than a glass of whisky, and Kate takes that always, so I suppose it agrees with her better than milk."

"Is it to prove me a drunkard you're trying?" Kate asked ferociously, whereat Mrs. Hatton shook her head mournfully, seeming to imply that it was needless for her to attempt to prove what was already proven.

Kate was dismissed that day, and the other servants made up their minds to abstain from the attempt to put Mrs. Hatton in the wrong.

"Was it possible that this sweet home-fairy-like presence had only been in his house a week?" Admiral Tullamore asked himself when he and Kildene had enjoyed seven days of Mrs. Hatton's rule. How the old gentleman had enjoyed himself! How he had been listened to with eager interest while he had recounted his daring adventures and doughty deeds! How he had been made to feel himself a hero of the highest order, and a man of the most dangerous (because undesigning) kind when Mrs. Hatton had murmured to him sometimes:

"Don't tell me any more to-night. Such bravery! Such grandeur of thought and act! No, I won't worship you, Admiral Tullamore. I'll leave that for some nobler, happier woman to do. So good-night."

"Gad! that woman appreciates me, and is unconscious of her own deserts," the

admiral would say approvingly to himself; and the next day undesigning Mrs. Hatton would receive some further testimony of his approval, in the form of an extended grant of unlimited sway.

She was a clever little woman. From the moment he came down to the one in which he began to go upstairs at night, she never let him out of her sight; and this she did in a way that pleased instead of irritated him.

"Kildene is a weary waste, beautiful as it is to me, when I do not see you in it," she took an early opportunity of murmuring. And he was a man and believed her.

The Edgecumbs had occupied the delightful shooting-box on the banks of the splendid trout-stream for ten days; and the rain it had rained every day. In the course of those ten days Captain Edgecumb had developed a fidgetiness which no one, save his mother and sisters, had known of in his nature before. Removed from the London atmosphere of clubs, theatres, and society, and from the country atmosphere of sport, tennis, and flirtation, he really didn't know what to do with himself when he found himself alone with Jenifer in a remote beautiful spot in County Cork.

He couldn't even make Biddy a reasonable ground of offence between his wife and himself; for Biddy was ready after twenty-four hours to "lay down her life for the young mistress," who, in her turn, declared that she "found Biddy perfectly civil and obliging." This was disappointing to Captain Edgecumb, who had hoped to find each dependent upon him for understanding the other.

But women are so inexplicable! Jenifer got on with the cook without him. She got on with Larry better than her husband did in Larry's sober moments, and under her encouraging influence these became more frequent than of yore; and she enjoyed long drives in the wild beautiful country, and found plenty to interest her in the different drivers' various descriptions of the better days poor Ireland had known, and the dark ones through which she was now passing.

But Captain Edgecumb could not find amusement in either of these sources. Driving in cars gave him a pain in his side, and he only cared for the country when he could hunt and shoot over it. Secretly he regretted now that he had not acceded to Jenifer's desire to go abroad; and even more fervently did he regret that the time

for Jenifer's first appearance had not arrived, which would oblige them to return at once to town.

One evening, while looking through a guide-book, searching for some place to which to drive on the following day, Jenifer saw the name of "Kildene, Admiral Tullamore's beautiful demesne in Kerry," and exclaimed joyfully:

"Shall we go and pay a visit to a very, very old friend of my father's? Admiral Tullamore has a place in a very accessible part of Kerry. As he's my godfather I really ought to go and see him."

"By all means; we'll be off to-morrow," Captain Edgecumb assented, when he had glanced at the description of Kildene. "We won't wait to write——"

"I don't like taking people by surprise," Jenifer protested.

"Oh, nonsense; in decently-managed houses of that class people are always prepared to receive one. You shall send a telegram the first thing in the morning, and we'll start by the first train; perhaps the old boy will give me a few days' shooting. Is he likely to leave you anything? Will he cut up well?"

"I don't know," Jenifer said curtly.

"Any children?"

"He's a bachelor."

"Then you're very wrong not to keep your eye upon him; being his god-daughter gives you a distinct claim. I wish you had told me about him before; however, we'll not lose any more time. Was he at your father's funeral?"

"He was not."

"How was that?"

"Hubert forgot to ask him for one thing; and, for another, he was displeased with Hubert for having married secretly."

"Can't see that it was any business of his."

"No business, perhaps; but he sympathised a good deal with my mother, and he knew she felt it a great deal."

"Well, you haven't married in a way that can displease him, dear," he said complacently. "You ought to have had him over at our wedding. Why didn't you ask him?"

"Because he is very angry with Jack on account of his marriage with Minnie Thurtle," Jenifer said unwillingly.

"No wonder," Captain Edgecumb retorted petulantly; "and so for the sake of having Minnie Thurtle to grace the ceremony, you offered a slight to your godfather, who can leave you well off if he pleases. I'll take

care that Minnie Thurtle shall not be a stumbling-block to our having intercourse in the future with him."

"She's Minnie Thurtle no longer, she's Minnie Ray now, my brother's wife, and I'll take care that no slight shall be offered to her, for the sake of any possible gain to myself."

"Absurdly quixotic, not to say quarrelsome you are, Jenifer," he said provokingly.

Then he went on to write a telegram in his wife's name, which he gave Larry orders to take to the telegraph-office the first thing in the morning.

Larry started with the best intentions, but the nearest telegraph-office was in Cork, and the way to Cork was thirsty. He was misty by the time he reached the fair city on the banks of the River Lee. Then he was detained by the curiosity he felt to see some political prisoners who were being put into the train for Queens-town, on their way to Spike Island. Loitering about made him as thirsty as walking fast had done before, and a convenient friend and public-house combining their attractions, delayed him till all recollection of the telegram had vanished from his mind. After a happy day in Cork, he got himself home with some difficulty, with the telegram safely reposing in his pocket.

Meanwhile Captain and Mrs. Edgecumb were wending their way by express to Kildene.

"The old boy might have had the decency to send a carriage to meet us," Captain Edgecumb observed when they reached the station for Kildene, and found that the gates of the demesne were three miles distant. "Three Irish miles are no joke to walk, when one's nothing to amuse oneself with," he added.

And so he had to put up with the only locomotive power available—a ramshackle outside car, and a lame horse.

As they made their painful way slowly up a magnificent avenue to the house, they saw an old gentleman and a rather young-looking lady walking up and down the terrace. At the same time the quick eyes of the young-looking lady lighted upon them.

"It must be Mrs. Hatton's twin-sister, Harry," Jenifer exclaimed.

And simultaneously Mrs. Hatton cried: "Here come some people I knew in

London. How could they have dared to take the liberty of calling upon me here?"

But she wished she had not spoken of their coming as an act of daring, when old Admiral Tullamore lifted his hat and waved it in the air, and said:

"It's my goddaughter, Jenifer Ray!"

Though they had come unannounced, there was nothing lacking in the warmth of their reception on Admiral Tullamore's part.

The best of everything, the most honourable apartments, the heartiest service from his household, were without delay placed at the absolute disposal of his godchild, the daughter of his dear old friend, and her husband. If Jenifer had been his own child he could not have given her a more affectionate and glad greeting. And as Mrs. Hatton witnessed the old man's unfeigned, unforced delight, she felt as if she could have wrung Jenifer's neck.

If Larry had not been false to his trust, the telegram would still never have reached Admiral Tullamore's hand. The lady-paramount of Kildene would have saved the admiral the trouble of either reading or answering it. And such a message would have gone back to Jenifer as would have effectually stopped her coming. So out of evil had come good in this case.

But inopportune as Jenifer's appearance on the scene was, from Mrs. Hatton's point of view, furious as that lady felt with Jenifer for being at Kildene at all, there was a very deceptively genuine looking air of pleasure at the advent of the new comers about the lady-housekeeper. And as about Jenifer there was neither guile nor shadow of turning, she accepted the dross for gold, and felt really glad that poor Mrs. Hatton was established in such a happy and luxurious home.

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own offspring and not by the milkmaid. Else why should Mr. Pybus, or Mrs. Pybus—who was ready enough herself to write insolent letters—bear in silence a letter which was insulting, and was meant to be insulting? Was it likely that they wished to keep now, for nothing, a boy, who, by their own showing, was so troublesome and intractable that they had declined to keep him for fifty pounds a year?

Perhaps this theory was plausible in itself; but, of course, it was its comfortableness which made it plausible to Mr. Tuck. It cleared at once his conscience and his character—set him free from self-reproach and from the reproach of his neighbours for his treatment of his nephew—and set him free also to continue without further qualms the crowning work of his life—the furnishing of his drawing-room.

At the same time, at first and in his heart of hearts, Mr. Tuck did not absolutely believe this theory. He but believed that he believed it. But by dint of repeating it again and again (always with his happy illustration of the tulchan), he came in time to entertain a respectable conviction of its truth—a good working conviction, at any rate, which made him ignore Archie's existence in his own mind, and resent allusion to it by others.

For the present, as we have said, it set his purse and conscience free for the furnishing of his drawing-room.

In Kingsford the report, "Mr. Tuck is furnishing his drawing-room," spreading like wild-fire from house to house, fluttered the doves of that maiden city. For Kingsford, in proportion to its population, could boast as many virgins as Cologne—happily out of danger of martyrdom, for there were no Huns. With the exception of Mr. Tuck and the curate, the nearest single man lived seven miles off by road and nine by rail. So that when the curate would sometimes say in his sermon, "Is there a single man in this church to-day?" the eye of every maiden would involuntarily, and for a moment, glance from him to Mr. Tuck as the only other representative of the species. Indeed, Mr. Tuck was the sole certain find in the place. For, while the curates came and went like woodcock, Mr. Tuck, like ground-game, gave sport all the year round. The curates were transient and incidental as entrées, but Mr. Tuck was a *pièce de résistance*, and a tough piece, too.

Just, however, as he was being given

over as hopeless by the most hopeful, Kingsford was electrified by the news that "the drawing-room of The Keep is being furnished."

"Who was she?" The boldest held their breath for a time in sheer amazement. Let her but break cover, and all would give tongue and tear her to a thousand pieces. But all were at fault. Mr. Tuck was a shy bird. No other old lady in Kingsford held so high an idea of his eligibility as himself. He knew, none better than he, that every cap in Kingsford had been set at him for years, and that it behoved him to walk delicately as Agag, as one whose life hung by a hair.

On the other hand, his yearning for sympathy was so deep and importunate that he must needs seek it from the sex meant by Nature to be nurses, not of the bruises of the body only, but of those also of the mind and of the heart.

But this sympathy he gathered as "one that gathers samphire, dreadful trade!" at the imminent risk of losing his head and his life. His one golden rule of safest way never to be left alone with a single woman, and to this rule he could make no exception.

When, however, it got noised abroad that he was engaged to be married, Mr. Tuck cunningly countenanced the rumour as an additional security against molestation on the principle:

Vacuus cantat coram latrone viator.

Therefore the Kingsford maidens were thrown out and at fault. No amount of badinage on the subject of his approaching nuptials could extract from Mr. Tuck more than a mysterious smile, which was "to the jealous confirmation strong as proof of Holy Writ."

At first suspicion, like night, darkened the faces of the Kingsford maidens towards each other. Each in turn looked the question, "Which of you have done this?" and each in turn the answer, "Thou canst not say I did it." Gradually, however, this cloud cleared from those fair brows, as the most microscopic scrutiny could not detect the least trace of special attention to any of their number. Besides, Mr. Tuck was now much away. In fact, he was bent on bargains, and would spend a sovereign on a railway to save a crown in a shop. And these frequent absences admitted of but one dread construction, she—"the unexpressive she"—was a foreigner!

Righteous and red was the wrath of Kingsford, both tradesmen and maidens

being infuriated by his furnishing his house from abroad. But the rage of the maidens, as may well be imagined, was redder than the rage of the upholsterers. For the provocation, in itself the most terrible known (*injuria spretæ formæ*), fell on the most inflammable material.

Nothing knows the mighty Odín,
Curse divine or vengeance human,
Rage of God, or mortal foeman,
Deadly as the wrath of woman!

Therefore Kingsford was like a hive upset by an unfound foe—its bees, furious over their lost honey, buzzing viciously about their queen. Their queen was a Mrs. Cassidy, the Irish widow of an Irish major. She was known in Kingsford by the name of “my poor dear husband,” from the frequency of her reference to that departed saint; nevertheless, she was much looked up to, and not altogether because she had once brought about a marriage between a curate and a Kingsford maiden. She was a genial, jovial, buxom widow, good-humoured, good-natured, but shrewd and canny withal—not so much by nature and of choice, as by education and of necessity. In fact, she had not been knocked about a hard world for twenty years for nothing. It was not, however, so much to her experience of the world that she owed her high place in Kingsford society as to her chameleon-like power of taking her colours from her company. She always identified herself with the person with whom she was speaking, and seemed to have no other cares, thoughts, or interests in the world than those of the fair confessor of the moment. She had also the one other thing needful to make her perfect as a confidante—secrecy. She could keep others’ counsel—and her own.

Accordingly she had more secrets in her keeping than had the Kingsford lawyer, doctor, and rector together.

Now, however, she was sought in counsel not anent “a fee-grief due to a single breast, but the general cause”—“Who was she?”

“Ah, my dears,” said Mrs. Cassidy to seven maidens, who dropped in upon her by twos and threes. “Ah, my dears, sure I can tell you nothing about her, except that she’s a blonde with blue eyes.”

“A blonde!” “How do you know?” “Have you seen her?” “Has he told you?”

“Now, girls, don’t be silly. Is it a likely thing that he’d marry a woman who wouldn’t match his furniture. Sure, don’t

you know he’s been matching furniture all his life?”

All the damsels laughed but one who was blonde, and who, therefore, thought there might be something in it.

“I wonder how old she is?” she asked pensively, being herself well out of her teens.

“She’ll be of the age of Queen Anne,” said Mrs. Cassidy decisively, alluding to the style of the new furniture.

“Queen Anne! Why Queen Anne? How old was Queen Anne?” asked the blonde, perplexed. However, she was left hopelessly behind to ponder over this puzzle, while the other ladies hurried on to discuss the future Mrs. Tuck on the lines laid down by Mrs. Cassidy.

“She’ll be an old maid,” said Miss Mary Nott, the youngest of the junta; “neat, stiff, prim, and uncomfortable, like one of the chairs——”

“Made to be sat upon,” interjected Mrs. Cassidy.

“Or like the old china in the hall,” said Miss Nott. “It always gives me the shivers to look at it.”

“Do you mean that she’ll be either blue, or cracked, or on the shelf?” asked the witty widow. All laughed except Miss Jane Beal, who prided herself on being of a very old family, and anyway was very old.

“She’s more likely to be something in the kitchen-way,” sneered Miss Beal with biting scorn, “coarse and vulgar.”

“No, Miss Beal; Mr. Tuck will marry no one who is not polished to such a pitch that he can see himself in her. Mark my words, girls, Mr. Tuck marries a looking-glass, and the most flattering he can find.”

“There are plenty of looking-glasses in Kingsford,” said Miss Martha Mounsey, thinking of three of the girls present, and most of all of the widow herself.

“Perhaps the frames didn’t suit”—Miss Mounsey was painfully plain—“or they were too modern,” nodding pleasantly towards Miss Mary Nott; “or he wanted one more. He’ll always have us, you know,” nodding now towards Miss Mounsey herself.

At this point the vicar called, the Rev. Philip Upcher, a most cheery old gentleman, so bright, breezy, and altogether old-fashioned, that he was forced to get funereal curates to keep pace with the times and peace with his puritan parishioners.

“Heyday, ladies, what’s the matter now?”

"We were discussing Queen Anne, Mr Upcher, Mr. Tuck's latest investment in furniture. When is she coming to The Keep?"

"Eh? Now, that's odd; 'pon my word that's very odd; but I've a letter in my pocket about her from Mr. Tuck," taking out the note amid the silence of an intense suspense, opening it, putting on his spectacles slowly, and looking at the letter, and then coolly shaking his head while he refolded it. "I don't think he'd like me to read it out, Mrs. Cassidy. There's a warmth of expression, you know, and that kind of thing. You young ladies would laugh at it."

"Indeed, indeed, we won't—we won't indeed; oh, do read it, Mr. Upcher, please," with an irresistible agony of entreaty.

"And you'll not talk about it. You must give me your word you'll not talk about it," said the old gentleman, hesitating, with his spectacles held in both hands ready for adjustment on his nose.

"We shall not breathe it to any one, Mr. Upcher. How could you think such a thing?"

"DEAR MR. UPCHER,—I—I——' I can hardly read it by this light. Perhaps you would be so kind as to read it, Mrs. Cassidy?"

Mrs. Cassidy was puzzled. Mr. Upcher was the last person in the world to commit an ungentlemanly breach of confidence. There was certainly some joke beneath this incredible demonstration of frankness. She took the letter and read it out slowly.

"Royal Hotel, Ryecote.

"DEAR MR. UPCHER,—You were perfectly right, and I'm so much obliged to you. I only wish you could have come with me and done the business for me; I am afraid I made rather a mess of it. Do you think twenty guineas dear? There was a crowd, and I was late, and she was nearly knocked down before I arrived. However, she's safe enough now, my beauty! I can hardly take my eyes off her. I hope you don't think twenty guineas dear. I know I should have got off cheaper if you had done the business for me quietly; but it can't be helped, and it's only once in a way, you know. I bring her back with me next Friday evening, as I hope the drawing-room will be ready for her by that time.—Again thanking you very much for your advice, I remain, very truly yours,

JAMES TUCK."

"Friday!" "Where was it?" "Who was she?" "What's her name?"

"Her name?" said Mr. Upcher hesitatively. "Well, I suppose you may as well know that as you know the rest; but mind, in confidence."

"Yes, yes!" "Of course!" "We shall not breathe it!"

"Her name is—Mrs. Tuck. Good morning!" And Mr. Upcher escaped for his life, not looking behind him.

Hereon there was a chorus of feminine execration:

"Nasty old thing!" "Just like him!" "He wouldn't have told us if it wasn't to be in all the papers to-morrow," etc.

But Mr. Upcher crossed the scent only for one moment; the next, they opened in full cry upon Mr. Tuck, his meanness and unmanliness. To think of his allowing his bride to wait for him at the altar! And to be nearly knocked down! And his shabbiness! To grudge twenty guineas for his wedding, with all his wealth! Well, they wished her joy of him—that was all.

Mrs. Cassidy listened to each and agreed with each, but was not herself taken in. She knew that the letter referred to some less execrable piece of furniture than a bride—probably to a bronze statuette, for Mr. Upcher was a connoisseur in such articles—and that Mr. Tuck made the prize his own, not in a church, but in an auction-room. But she wasn't going to spoil sport. She knew that in an hour the sacred secret would be all over Kingsford, and, indeed, Miss Martha Mounsey frankly avowed that she had no intention of keeping a promise exacted under the false pretence of a privilege. For where was the privilege of knowing to-day what all the world would know to-morrow? Therefore the junta broke up even before they had picked Mr. Tuck's character to the bone; for the triple delight of spreading news which was at once bad, secret, and matrimonial, was irresistible to a woman's heart. Hence it came to pass that on the following Friday evening, when the express from Ryecote was due, Kingsford station was like a church—crowded out with ladies. With the loyalty of the gladiators of old—"Morituri te salutamus"—they paraded to grace the triumph of their conqueror. But when the train drew up they looked blankly one on the other. There was no bride nor bridegroom—only a father or two, who felt flattered by their daughters' kind attention in coming to meet them—and there was no other train that night due

from Ryecote. Could the whole thing be a hoax of Mr. Upcher's invention? Mr. Upcher himself appeared at this moment, laughing. If he had published Mr. Tuck's banns in church, his marriage would not have been better advertised than by his imparting it as a sacred secret to these seven discreet damsels. Therefore he laughed—with impunity, for to charge him with the hoax would be to convict themselves of breach of promise.

"Heyday, ladies, where are you all off to? Utah? Have you seen Mr. Tuck? I expected him by this train. Hasn't come? Dear, dear, that's a disappointment. But where are you all off to at this hour?"

It was a mere fortuitous concourse of atoms, it appeared. Some had come for a walk; others to meet their revered parents; and a few in expectation of something by rail which hadn't arrived. These last Mr. Upcher was gallantly anxious to assist.

"What was it? Were there more parcels than one? Were they tied together? Did they ask the guard where the baggage was stowed?"

Thus the facetious Mr. Upcher.

But where was Mr. Tuck? Here Mr. Upcher was himself as much at sea as the maidens he mocked. Mr. Tuck was to have come by this train, for his carriage was there to meet it. He couldn't have been late for it, as it was the last train, and he was the fussiest of men. Mr. Upcher sent back the carriage, wondering a little what had become of Pygmalion and his Galatea. In truth, Mr. Tuck had been in very good time for the train at Ryecote, and had snugly ensconced himself with his Galatea in his arms in the corner of a carriage which he had to himself, when something occurred to detain him at Ryecote. Let us narrate this occurrence.

Business brought Mrs. Cassidy to Ryecote once a quarter. She banked at Ryecote, doubting at once the solvency and the secrecy of the local bankers of Kingsford. If she banked in Kingsford, her modest means, she thought, would be known, and might be lost. Therefore she banked at Ryecote, and distrusting not the bank only, but the post and the whole population of Kingsford—she always herself drew or deposited her money at headquarters. Women are always suspicious in matters of business, because of their ignorance therein.

"Suspicious amongst thoughts are like bats amongst birds—they ever fly by twi-

light. There is nothing makes a man suspect much, more than to know little."

Hence the business which took Mrs. Cassidy to Ryecote once a quarter. Now this Friday was her quarter-day, and she had set off in the morning without a thought of Mr. Tuck. But the sight of some bronzes in a shop-window at Ryecote recalled him to her mind, and suggested to her the jocose idea of returning in the same train and carriage with him to give a more amusing point to Mr. Upcher's joke. She had no doubt that all the maidens in Kingsford, who had reached or passed the years of discretion, would be in or about the station that evening on the look-out for the blushing bride. She pictured to herself a hundred times over, and with ever new delight, every expression from surprise to disgust, or at least disappointment, which would sweep, swift as the sun and shade of a March day, across the fair faces who would crowd to watch Mr. Tuck hand her out of the carriage.

"It would be laughter for a month, and a good jest for ever."

But the witty widow reckoned without her host.

She reached Ryecote station even before Mr. Tuck arrived, bearing Galatea.

She waited until he had chosen and entered his carriage, and then followed, manifesting the most pleasurable surprise upon finding him there. But this pleasurable surprise was not reciprocated. Mr. Tuck would as soon travel alone with a garotter as with an unprotected female. What was to be done? He spoke and looked as one distraught, glaring through his spectacles, now in horror at the widow, now in hope through the window. Passengers passed and repassed, hesitated at the door, looked in, but, like the priest and Levite, gave the unhappy victim a wide berth. At last he heard the doors being banged and locked. Muttering something about a forgotten parcel, he sprang up, rushed from the carriage, and being in a frenzy of fuss and fear, and embarrassed by his Galatea, he stumbled and fell between the footboard and the platform. Two porters hurried to help him up and to a seat, which he needed, as he had not only scraped all the skin off his leg, but had also sprained his ankle. Mrs. Cassidy, whose good-nature was really concerned for him, rushed off to fetch him some wine from the refreshment-room, as he was white as a sheet. Meanwhile the train started without them. Therefore Mr. Tuck

did not arrive that night at Kingsford, nor for many nights to come.

Before the wine had quite brought him to himself, Mrs. Cassidy, seeing that the last train for Kingsford had gone, sent for a cab, had him carried to it, and accompanied him in it to the nearest hotel, which was The Devonshire, not The Royal, where he would have been more at home. When she had got him to The Devonshire, and had sent for a doctor, she insisted upon her privilege, as a soldier's widow, of seeing herself to his wounds, while they waited for the surgeon.

She had saved before now, she said, as fine a leg as ever stepped in shoe-leather, speaking of the operation as coolly as if it had been the pickling of a leg of pork. She then proceeded to cheer Mr. Tuck with a most ghastly account of her successful treatment of the leg of a certain Phil Henneker, who had his shin-bone shattered like a broken pane with a bullet. Fortunately the regimental surgeon had so many other legs to cut off, that Phil was left all to herself—otherwise his leg had gone off as sure as the gun that shot it. For a leg was like any other old friend, easier to cut than to keep. This was a reproachful reference to Mr. Tuck's freezing and affrighted reception of her in the train. Mrs. Cassidy then proceeded to give a most graphic and gruesome account of the suppurating wound she had healed, and a most glowing account of the doctor's compliments to her for having staved off what seemed the certain approaches of mortification.

These inspiriting details electrified Mr. Tuck, who was a confirmed hypochondriac. He was always thinking of his health, always weighing himself, dieting himself, drugging himself. He felt that his shin-bone was certainly shattered like a pane of glass, and he also felt the agonised twinges of incipient mortification. Horrible as the approaches of the widow might be, they were not so horrible as the approaches of mortification. Therefore he suffered her with a piteous patience to cut off his boot, peel off his sock, and roll up his trousers to the knee. Having done this deftly, Mrs. Cassidy sponged the excoriated shin with warm water, and fomented the sprained ankle with a hot linseed-meal poultice.

"It will not have to be cut off?" faltered Mr. Tuck as she sponged his leg.

"Not while I'm here," answered the widow sturdily.

Mr. Tuck mentally balanced the tem-

porary presence of Mrs. Cassidy against the eternal absence of his leg, and decided that, on the whole, the loss of his leg would be the less endurable of the two evils—that is, of course, if the widow would warrant it against mortification. It was some time, however, before he could muster up courage to ask:

"Is there any danger of mortification?"

"Not with your constitution, Mr. Tuck, and my nursing."

Here, again, there was sweet and bitter mixed. He was glad to hear a good word for his sorry constitution, but he shuddered at the prospect of its having to be propped up by Mrs. Cassidy.

"You need not be alarmed, Mr. Tuck," continued that devoted woman, "I shall not leave you till you are quite out of danger."

Mr. Tuck groaned as he looked from his endangered leg to the dangerous widow. There was no help for it. At this point Mrs. Cassidy was called away. The doctor had come, and was in a private room, where Mrs. Cassidy had directed that he should be shown, in order that she might give him some necessary hints for the conduct of the case. She was fortunate in her doctor.

Dr. Pilcher had a large and poor practice, for the support of a large and poor household, and was rejoiced to hook a rich patient, whom he would have played to the last turn of the reel, even without Mrs. Cassidy's caution to be cautious. She took extreme care to impress two things upon the doctor—that his patient was very rich and very rash. If the doctor failed to convince him of the gravity of his injuries Mr. Tuck would certainly, and at all risks, return to Kingsford to-morrow. As this would have been almost as deplorable a consummation to Dr. Pilcher as to Mrs. Cassidy, Mr. Tuck, with all his rashness, was little likely to leave The Devonshire in hot haste.

The doctor, having been thus prepared to shake his head over the case, shook it till all Mr. Tuck's fiery rashness oozed, like Bob Acres's courage, out of the palms of his hands. Dr. Pilcher had no doubt at all, however, that with care and skill and good nursing—looking towards Mrs. Cassidy—the leg might be cured. He also thought it proper and prudent to pay an extravagant compliment to the widow upon the extraordinary surgical skill she had shown in her treatment of the case. With such a nurse in charge it would not be necessary

for him to call more than twice a day—making at the moment a mental calculation of what two guineas a day would come to in three weeks.

When the doctor had taken his leave, Mrs. Cassidy begged that Mr. Tuck would excuse her, as she must telegraph at once both to Mr. Tuck's home and to her own, announcing that neither of them would be back for some days. This identification of their acts and interests was terrible to Mr. Tuck, but what was to be done? There was no escape from her precious head-breaking balms.

ANCIENT LAKE DWELLINGS.

"IN the old world, and in the modern world of heathenism, the normal state is a state of war." So we are always being told in sermons, and I suppose there is some truth in it. When Greek met Greek, or Italian Italian, it generally ended in a fight, unless one of the two had *xenia*, tokens—the half of a ring, or something of the kind—to show that there had been kinship or friendship between some of their forefathers.

Being, then, in a constant state of war, the old people had to be always on their guard. Thucydides tells us that the pre-historic Greeks, in the days when everybody went about armed, and piracy was the profession *par excellence*, were afraid to build their towns on the coast, lest the sea-robbers should swoop down on them, but lived inland, unless, indeed, they could manage to insulate the promontories which afforded such tempting sites. In England we see instances of both arrangements. Our oldest ports have not all ceased to be seaports because the land has gained on the sea, and the harbour has become silted up. In some cases they never were seaports at all in the strict sense of the word, being purposely built as far as possible out of the viking's reach. In Cornwall the cliff-castles are a case of promontory-fortifying, of which Worle Hill, by Weston-super-Mare, is also a good example. There was no chance of cutting a canal and insulating—as the old Greeks did where they could—with the cliffs a couple of hundred feet high; but the triple ditch and wall practically made islands of these enclosures.

Another favourite way of protection, not from sea, but from land robbers, was to build out into the water. This is, or was, done in many parts of the world.

Hippocrates, writing about "climate and its effect on health," tells of some who, in the marshes of the Phasis—a river that gives its name to our pheasant, and to which Jason sailed for the Golden Fleece—built their houses in the midst of the water, sailing to them in canoes "dug out" of whole trees. Herodotus, a little junior to the father of Greek medicine, has a long passage about the Thracians on Lake Prasias, whose settlement was approached by a narrow bridge, on the removal of which they were able to defy the whole Persian army. Captain Cameron found the same plan adopted in Central Africa for protection against the slave-dealers. Captain Burton found pile-villages off the Dahomey coast, a mile from shore. Pile-dwellings are also common in Borneo and all over Malaysia; in Japan, too, and over in South America. Almost all the world over they have been the resource, not of savages, for they are far beyond the ability of savages to construct, but of people in what is called "a primitive state of culture." Such were the Highlanders and their Irish cousins up till quite recently; such was "the merry Swiss boy" when Cæsar thought the great tribe of the Helvetians "a menace to civilisation," and accordingly exterminated it. In Ireland, a country which, for its size, has more old written records than any other in Europe, these so-called crannogs are proved by the Annals to have been in use as early as the seventh century, and to have been used as late as Cromwell's time. But Irish Annals have not been much read till quite recently; and nothing was heard of the crannogs till Sir W. Wilde, M.D., discovered one at Lagore, near Dunshaughlin, in Meath. This was in 1839. Eighteen years later he published a catalogue describing forty-six of these lake-islands, and foretelling the discovery of many more as the drainage of the country got more perfected. But Ireland is for most of us a great deal farther off—in sympathy, and even in time-distance—than Switzerland, and people who had not troubled themselves about Sir W. Wilde's crannogs any more than they did about his wife "Speranza's" patriotic poems and sympathy with "young Ireland," were roused to enthusiasm when Dr. Keller announced the existence of Pfahlbeuten—pile-buildings—along the Lake of Zurich. Very little snow was melted during the summer of 1853, and in the winter the lake was unusually low. At Ober Meilen the people

took advantage of this to enclose bits of land with walls, filling in the space with mud dug out of the lake. But in digging they soon found the heads of piles, stone celts, stags' horns, etc.; and before long like discoveries were made in other places, notably at Bienne. Since then draining has been going on more rapidly in Switzerland than in Ireland. The canny Swiss try to "subdue the earth" as far as possible, instead of worrying their very lives out in the contest for and against Land Acts; and we are told that there is scarcely a sheltered bay in any Swiss or Tyrolese lake which did not contain its lake-island.

They were just as numerous in the United Kingdom. The Icenian had them in East Anglia. When Sir C. Bunbury, a generation ago, drew the water off Wretham Mere to get at the rich black mud, piles were found, and red-deer horns which had evidently been sawn off. The Cymri used them. There is a stockaded island with log platform in Llangorse Pool, that marshy, reedy water near Welsh Hay, in Breconshire. In Scotland real islands were often fortified. Who does not remember the attack on one in The Lady of the Lake, and how, when a swimmer is bribed with the offer of

My cap with bonnet-pieces store
To him who'll swim a bowshot o'er
And loose a shallop from the shore,

the bloodthirsty knights delightedly cry:

We'll tame the savage mountaineer
As his slogan tames the deer.

So in Ireland the Hen's Castle in Lough Corrib is on a real island; and several of the crannogs, Sir W. Wilde says, were cluans (shallows of clay, wholly or partly dry in summer) into which were driven oak piles; and upon these were mortised heavy oak beams, laid flat on the moist sand, over which, in many cases, the bog has formed to a depth of more than sixteen feet. Then came a second tier of piles, mortised into the flat foundation beams. On these were raised the dwellings which, as they appear in Dr. Lee's frontispiece to his translation and something more of Keller's book, are at least as good as a settler's log shanty. All those doors and windows! I don't believe the old Helvetians ever built that way. Having no glass, they would surely make their windows small and their doors low; and, of course, such was the case in Ireland, where the cabins, even of the present day, are by no means remarkable for abundance of window.

Similar lake dwellings have been found in other parts of Europe; in the Pomeranian haffs, those strange masses of fresh water close to the sea, comparable with our Norfolk Broads; in the Neuvièdler See in Hungary; in the lakes of Upper Austria; at Paladun in France. In all it was the same story: stout piles rammed in to keep the soft mud of the shallow which was chosen as a site from being washed away by a change of current; a very heavy platform of split trunks; an upper tier of piles, sometimes with the connecting cross-beams more or less perfect, and occasionally with their sides grooved or rabbeted to admit of large planks being driven down between them.

But this does not mean that they were all in use at the same time. We talk of stone age, old and new, of bronze age, etc., till we sometimes forget that, when it was stone age here it was iron age somewhere else; just as now it is stone age for the Digger Indians, among whom you may see the process of making flint arrow-heads exactly like those which are dug up in old British cairns. So it was with lake dwellings; some were abandoned ages ago; some were in use almost yesterday. From the silence of all Roman historians about the Swiss ones, we may infer that they were not used after Rome had got hold of Gaul. Perhaps they were destroyed by the Helvetians themselves, when—as Cæsar tells us—they burnt all their towns and villages preparatory to that wholesale emigration to which he put such a sudden stop. The state of the remains shows that in most cases they were burnt to the water's edge before they were abandoned. Abandoned before the Romans came in, when were they first used? The remains prove that they had been formed and inhabited by people who had got off the great lines of civilisation before they had begun to keep the domestic fowl, or to sow winter corn, or use hemp. Hence, argues Dr. Keller, they came into Switzerland very early, bringing with them, however, the use of flax and bast, and of barley and wheat, and having tamed the horse as well as the cow, pig, sheep, goat, cat, and dog. The Irish and Scotch crannogs were probably formed much later, the stream of population not having reached the extreme west till long after. In them many of the finds are of iron, which, of course, marks them as recent; and the occurrence in many bones of crystals of the beautiful green phosphate of iron—

vivianite, as it was called by its Cornish discoverer, in honour of the well-known Cornish family—is no proof of age. If bone and a bit of iron were decaying side by side, the vivianite would often form with wonderful rapidity.

In both the Scotch and Irish crannoges stone, bronze, and iron implements are found together, for in both countries these “ages” overlapped one another. Stone hammers, tied on to the handle just as the New Zealander ties them on, were used in remote parts of Ireland till the other day; hand querns were used in the Highlands almost till steam mills began to be set up at Glasgow and other “centres.” In both countries these lake dwellings were used much later than in Switzerland. In Scotland Edward the First used one as a fortification; another was destroyed by Parliament in 1648. In Ireland several were in use in Elizabeth’s wars, and one, Crannog Macnavin, County Galway, was taken by the English in 1610, while another, Ballynahuish, was inhabited fifty years ago. Some, if I mistake not, are still used as burial-places; perhaps the island on which the Watertons are buried—who that has read Charles Waterton’s life can forget the account of his being rowed over to the sepulchre of his fathers?—is a crannog.

The crannog men, then, in Ireland and Scotland were the same as those now living there. The Scottish “finds” figured in Dr. Munro’s book, which is one of those books that are a joy to handle and a pleasure to look upon, include glass and stone rings; beads of vitreous paste; leather shoes, ornamented with a stamped pattern; bone needles, some with the eye in the centre, like those of sewing-machines; fragments of carved wood; a comb or two; iron saws; fibulæ of bronze; horse-bits partly of iron partly of bronze; and so-called “girdles” of moss-stems much like those worn by some negro tribes and others whose usual costume is very light. These girdles may have been simply the bathing-dress of a people whose habits must have been aquatic, though they had canoes and big ones; a “dug out,” found in Lake Owel, Westmeath, is over forty feet long. Along with these later remains are found flint flakes—“strike-a-lights” archæologists are beginning to call them—scrapers, and knives of flint, stone spindle-whorls (in use, Dr. Mitchell assures us in *The Past and the Present*, two generations ago), bone chisels, celts, hammer-stones, and other so-called pre-historic remains. But there is

no reason for supposing the use of these to have died out before those who used iron had come to live in these island strongholds.

Some of the Swiss lake villages appear to have been of great size. At Wangen forty thousand piles have been counted, and one hundred thousand at Robenhausen. Each contained on an average three hundred huts. Round each settlement was a circle of piles driven down just below the water’s edge to prevent hostile canoes from making their way inside. On these the Swiss fishers had often caught their nets, but nothing was thought of them; perhaps they were accounted for as some sceptics accounted for the Scotch crannogs as “piles to spread lint (linen) on,” or as “the site of an old whisky-still.” Till 1853 no one dreamed of connecting them with the early inhabitants—early, but not the earliest, for Switzerland, too, had its post-glacial caves, in which have been found carved pieces of reindeer-horn of the usual type; and these show that the cave-men were in the land long before the lake-dwellers. But even when the lake-dwellers first appeared the land was far different from what it now is. The forests, full of red-deer and wild oxen, came down to the water’s edge. Beavers were abundant. Basket-making was known, but not the weaving of woollen. Nor was their pottery made on the wheel. In mortising and dovetailing timber they were not inferior to ourselves.

The finding of nephrite, or noble jade, so much prized in China, and of which a few samples—battle-axes, handed down from earliest times, probably brought in by the first inhabitants—are found in New Zealand, has given rise to strange conjectures. Some have supposed that these Swiss lake-dwellers came direct from the far East, as if the earliest things established among half-civilised people were not trade-roads, which were sacred in time of war. Such were the roads from the Baltic by which amber was taken right on to the Neuchatel lake-islands, and the American road by which the mound-builders of Ohio got the shells that are only found on the Gulf of Mexico. Wherever they came from, these lake-men grew corn, but had no hemp; of wheat they had three kinds, among them the so-called Egyptian; of their bread samples are still found, but they also ate water-lily roots, and that curious plant the water-chestnut (*trapa natans*), which, then abundant, has

now almost disappeared from the country. They probably had that strange prejudice against eating hare, which Cæsar says existed among the old Britons, for no bones of this toothsome quadruped are found in their dwellings. Some of the Swiss archæologists have ventured to pronounce on their personal appearance. Now, it is a great deal to construct, as Cuvier and Owen could do, a whole animal out of a single bone; but to guess the type of features from a few, very few, bones seems past man's power. Nevertheless we are confidently told that these early Swiss were small of stature, and had no grace of limb. Very probably; few aborigines are comely, except those wonderful Basques, the mixture of whose blood gives a beauty of their own to our West Cornish and Western Irish.

In Dr. Munro's book, I think the most touching thing is the enthusiasm of a schoolmaster, M'Naught of Kilmaurs, who was the first to discover the crannog of Buston two years ago. Five years before, passing a stackyard, he had noticed several huge curious-looking beams, but was quieted by hearing they came from some old house. Meanwhile, in 1878, began the great digging at Lochlee, near Tarbolton, and thither the archæological schoolmaster went to see what could be seen. He there saw the piles and mortised beams in situ; but even the sight of these did not rouse him till one day at Kilmaurs, talking with a farmer about bog-oak furniture, he was told, "Why, there's bog-oak enough lying about Buston stackyard to furnish the whole parish." "At once," he says, "I remembered what I had formerly seen, and felt almost sure that I had noticed the mortised holes, and that the beams were identical with those I had since seen at Lochlee."

The moment school was over, he went to the farm and saw that the beams must belong to a crannog. "Nay," said the farmer, "it was juist a timmer-house ane o' the auld earls had put up to shoot deuks." Getting rid of this sceptic as best he could, Mr. M'Naught persuaded the man's youngest son to help him in freeing one of the beams, which were used as rick-bottoms, far enough for him to saw off a mortised joint. With this he then went down to the site of the crannog, but it was too late to see anything. However, he stumbled against what seemed to be a pile fixed upright in the soil; and, coming next morning, sure enough

he found three uprights, and the mortised beams plainly visible in the side of a drain. There was no doubt it was a crannog. The next thing was to get the landowner, Lord Eglinton, or rather his agent, to allow the digging to begin; and, this done, Dr. Munro, Mr. Cochran Patrick, M.P., and a number of ladies and gentlemen assembled to see the six workmen start a "guide trench" across the crannog. There was no lake here. A generation ago the place had been a mossy bog in summer, and a shallow pool in winter, the site of the crannog being marked by a low mound, called "The Knowe." But for many years the quondam lake had been a rich meadow, the Knowe having been made still more insignificant by the removal of thirteen cartloads of timber, respecting which the farmer remembered the great difficulty there was in detaching the mortised beams from one another. This had drawn from a workman the remark, "There maun hae been dwellers here at ae time." Draining had made the mound sink still lower, so that, when Mr. M'Naught found out what it was, it was scarcely distinguishable from the rest of the meadow.

The trench, two or three feet deep and five wide, gave nothing but a spindle-whorl and a quern, till it reached the southern edge of the crannog. Here were found piles and a huge beam, and close by was traced the "kitchen midden," or dust-heap, which yielded a number of bone and horn pins, needles, some handsome combs, a lot of iron spear and arrow heads, a few bronze buckles and rings, two massive gold spiral finger-rings, and two very little gold coins (trientes), supposed to be Saxon. There were also fragments of pottery, and a clay crucible, just in shape like those now in use. There were bones, too, of animals, from which it was argued that the sheep of those days were long and slender-legged. Gold always counts for so much; else the finds here bear no comparison with those at Lochlee, among which, besides the horse-bits partly of bronze partly of iron, were fibulæ enough to fasten the tartans of a whole clan; or at Kilbirnie, where was found a lovely little bronze lion, forming a ewer, the tail being turned back to make the handle; or at Loch Dowalton in Wigton, where, among many bronze bowls and pots, was one very ornate and of really good workmanship. The rarity of coins is a marked feature of all the finds. I have seen more taken out of one Roman camp in East Anglia than

were found in all the crannogs described by Dr. Munro.

A crannog, then, is a beam structure (crann is mast or tree-trunk in Gaelic), and the plan of mortising beams supported on piles was carried out in many places where such ponderous foundations were needless. Primitive man was as much a creature of routine as his descendants. But, of course, not all the Scottish artificial lake-islands are Pfahlbauten; some are made by simply adding to the silt thrown up by cross-currents at the outlets of such lakes as have gravelly beds. The piles and mortised beams were only necessary where the bottom was of soft mud or clay. In Derwentwater, for instance, you might soon get a crannog by driving piles round some sedge-grown shallow, choosing, of course, a very dry summer for your work, and then guiding into the enclosure those so-called floating islands—masses of weeds, tussocks torn up either by wind and water or by the gases of decaying vegetation—which visitors are often called on to notice. The only other place, by the way, where I ever saw such islands was in a lonely lake close by the Kenmare river, near the ruined church of Kilmacillogue. St. Quinlan's Lake it is called; and, living in such consecrated water, the islands are bound to behave with strict ecclesiastical propriety. "They do be moving mostly about the great Church festivals," said an old man to whom I rather impatiently pointed out that, in spite of a strong wind, the grass islets were perfectly motionless. "Sure, it's at Easter or Whitsuntide I've seen them travelling across, and underneath them was like the feet of a duck moving backward and forward." The makings of a crannog were in St. Quinlan's Lake, but for timber you would have had to go as far as Killarney before you could have got trees big enough.

On the mechanical skill shown by the crannog builders, Dr. Munro waxes quite enthusiastic. The problem was—given a small mossy lake with reed-grown margin, and some ten or twelve feet of water above a virtually unfathomable quagmire, to construct therein a place of defence which should be inaccessible, even if the enemy had pierced the forest and discovered the secluded lake, and his conclusion is that no modern engineer could have solved it half so successfully. That the old people should have succeeded so well he considers "another proof of the

extraordinary vigour, intense individuality, and plastic character of the early Celtic civilisation." By-and-by these wooden walls and refuges of piles would fall into disrepute when they came to be assailed by more skilled besiegers capable of shooting burning arrows or fire-balls. Fear of fire led to the use of stone, which the splintering of stone under a bombardment has now again in some sort done away with. And for a heavy stone building, a platform of beams, no matter how heavy, resting on a quaking bog, was a poor foundation. Water still continued to be a great element in defence, but it was found better to carry the water to the castle. The moat superseded the lake.

A crannog, then, was a stockaded island, wholly or in part artificial, much like what Cæsar tells us was the typical British village, only hidden away in a reedy lake instead of in a morass or marshy wood. Who built them and when? We may imagine them used ever since Celts began to inhabit these islands; but, from the comparative modernness of most of the finds, Dr. Munro thinks they were not in general use till the civilised Britons got into trouble with Angles on the one hand and Picts and Scots on the other, as soon as they were left alone by the Romans. Mr. Green's book gives a graphic account of how in South Britain group after group of Romano-British cities went down before the successive attacks of different tribes of invading Teutons, much as group after group of the cities of Canaan went down before Joshua. There seems to have been no power of cohesion, every district stood by itself and fell unaided by the rest. And it must have been even a worse look-out for the Britons of Strathclyde and the other Romanised districts between the two walls. They were poorer and weaker than their kinsmen over the Border; and their Pictish enemies at any rate were nearer to them. Everyone who has read it must remember Mr. Green's vivid picture of the provincials of Eboracum (York) and the other great towns of the Ouse valley fleeing for their lives with wives and children and such treasures as they could hastily collect, up Wharfedale and over the fells, till they found a refuge in those Clapham caves near Ingleborough where their traces are found in the silt and stalagmite. Mr. Green traces their gradual decline from the culture they brought with them to almost savagery, in the gradual deterioration of the "finds," as you get nearer the surface. The lower beds yield

delicate ivories, bronzes, enamels, coins—just what could be carried off in a hasty flight for life. These grow fewer and fewer in the upper deposit. Even the ordinary utensils as they wear out are not replaced, until at last the time comes when he whose grandfather had been, perhaps, a cultured Roman citizen, was fain to boil his venison pottage by putting red-hot stones into a skin of water. There is no such gradual deterioration traceable in the crannogs, but then none of them have that wonderful stalagmite which, in the caves, rapidly buried each object as it was lost or flung aside, and kept it as safely as a fly in amber. Things in a peat-bog have a wonderful tendency to sink to the same level. I believe the little “elfin-pipes,” later of course than the introduction of tobacco, have been found “associated with”—that is the term—“elfin-bolts,” i.e. flint arrow-heads, because both had sunk through the peat to the gravel below. One thing of which “the Celt” seems to have been very proud was his wife’s back-comb. The type seems to have been much the same, whether the “find” comes from Uriconium (Wroxeter)—the great Roman city which gave its name to the Wrekin (Uriken)—or from the Broch of Burrian in Orkney, or from Ballinderry Crannog in Ireland. The Irish specimen is much the most elaborate; but the others are not far behind it in ornamentation. Another thing in which “the Celt” excelled was the art of embossing leather. “Brogues” are found both in Irish and Scotch crannogs, stamped all over with the most elegant ornament.

You have, then, three authorities, if you want to go deeper into the question of lake dwellings. Sir W. Wilde (and, more recently, Mr. J. H. Kinahan, of the Geological Survey), for the Irish; Dr. Keller, for the Swiss; and Dr. Munro, for the Scotch. I can’t help thinking it would give zest to a fishing excursion, especially if the sport is slow, to know that there’s a crannog in the loch, and to row over and try to get sight of some of the piles if not of the mortised beams, and to think of the many sights such a stronghold has seen, and the various fortunes that have befallen it. They were not always refuges from invasion. “The Wolf of Badenoch” had one of them in Rothiemurchus Loch, better known as Loch-au-Eilean. Of a crannog on Loch Canmore, in Aberdeen, the name, prison-island, sufficiently attests the use. But the great majority were places of

safety; and the nature of the “finds” proves that those who took refuge in them were not savages, but people of considerable culture. When next you go to Zurich, therefore, be sure to look in the museum for the wonderful collection of all kinds of things found in the Pfahlbeuten, and if you hear of a newly-found pile-village be sure to go and see it. In Scotland and Ireland you will have no such grand central museum; but there are many beautiful and interesting crannog-finds in the Royal Irish Academy’s museum, and in that of the Scottish Antiquarian Society. It is a pity such things are not kept together, so that the investigator may know where to look. But though books like Dr. Munro’s will give you a good idea of the “finds;” nothing but personal inspection on a calm day, when (as I said) the fish won’t bite fast, can give you a good idea of the crannog itself.

BY PARCELS POST.

WHEN night is drawing on, and London city is fast being emptied of its swarms; when the lights in the long rows of offices and warehouses are going out one by one; when in fancy the full high-pressure steam of daily City life is blowing harmlessly off from every escape-pipe; and when, in fact, the world in general is making for his wife and his domestic hearth—then, when other people are relaxing their labours, the Post Office takes up the expiring vitality of the day and wakens up into vivid and energetic movement. Then the old building which has seen so many changes, and before which of old the mail-coaches assembled in all their bravery, is surrounded by a mass of less ambitious vehicles, which, however, with their scarlet-and-gold panels and the uniforms of their drivers, retain a traditional flavour of the high-stepping glories of the past. The old building, too, begins to glow with light from cellar to attic, an inward light that seems to infuse itself into the very stones of the gloomy pile, and to cause it to glow with subdued and phosphorescent light.

Not long ago the whole business of the Post Office was transacted in this building, which perhaps will always be in popular parlance the General Post Office, and in a roomy and leisurely age a broad public arcade ran through the centre of it—a place for country cousins to lounge through when they were conscientiously working

through the sights of London. But now from roof to basement every inch of the building is devoted to the purposes of sorting and dispatching the correspondence of the great metropolis, its letters, its packets, its newspapers, and—aye, here's the rub—its parcels.

For it is this latest development of the Post Office system we are in search of to-night. The eager rush to the letter-boxes as the moment of closing draws near, the storm, the whirlwind of letters, the roar of the stamps that impress the official mark, like the sound of the winnowing of a Titanic corn-stack, the great hall with its hundreds of shaded lights and its scene of regulated confusion and unruffled haste—all this must be left behind. These things other pens have described. There have been some in the very arcana of these mysteries to whom has not been lacking the gift—fatal or otherwise as may happen—of the pen of the ready writer.

In the nature of things, there is no frenzied hurry about the parcels. Most people leave the writing, and consequently the posting, of their letters to the very last moment in which the feat is possible. But a parcel is a different matter. Business parcels are generally made up with as little delay as possible after the receipt of the letters which call them into being, and people in general get their parcels off their minds as soon as they can. Thus we find the parcels post counter, which is round the corner from the great muckle-mouthed repository of letters in general, going on in its regular swing without sharing in the frantic hurry of the letter branch. But then this counter, after all, is only the local office for Aldersgate Street and the neighbourhood—one of the fifteen thousand postal centres which have been created parcels centres as well—with the advantage, however, of being in direct communication with a chief parcel-sorting and parcel-dispatching depôt, which is situated in the basement below us. But as the direct communication alluded to is by means of a wooden slide, highly polished by the friction of successive baskets, it seems hardly adapted for a visitors' entrance, and thus admittance is sought through the classic portico in Aldersgate Street.

Beyond this portico we should hardly penetrate, but should be speedily expelled from the hive as intrusive drones, were we not furnished with credentials from the big house opposite, where are the secretariat and directive branches of the department. But

the courteous and energetic assistant-secretary has furnished us with an "open sesame," and the halls of many lights, and the caves of innumerable parcels, are open to our inspection—not without a guide; it would be difficult to thread our way through the subterranean passages without the help of one familiar with the premises, and we follow our guide through the echoing vaults, where a steam-engine is noiselessly pounding away, and where an endless lift carries up and brings down successive stages loaded with great bags of newspapers, with nimble young letter-sorters and letter-carriers hanging on like flies, a lift that never ends and never stops, and never waits a moment for anybody, but goes on in its regular and rhythmic stride, in a stern inexorable kind of way that is quite impressive to witness. And here, if our thoughts were not turned in another direction, we might notice rows of men doing nothing but overhauling and mending mail-bags, no one of which makes a second journey without this careful overhaul and repair. There are men who spend their lives in turning bags inside out and investigating every corner. Sometimes, notwithstanding the care taken, a letter is found that has been overlooked—more often little knick-knacks, coins, articles of jewellery, rings, even watches, articles that careless people—ungenerous, too, as laying snares for weaker brethren—have popped into unregistered letters. But all this is wide of our mark, and must be passed with a glance, for here we enter the realms of the parcels post. Not fairy-like realms by any means, although thus far in the bowels of the earth—lower down indeed than the general level of the basement, which has been excavated to afford greater roof space—but realms that are warm and dry and pleasant, all whitewash and unstained deal, and full of light and animation. The great features of the place are the long rows of deal fixtures, or cages, upon which are ranged an army of baskets. Bearing in mind the fifteen thousand postal centres, it will be seen that nothing short of an army would here avail, and then in addition to the residential baskets, as they may be called, the floors are strewn thick with baskets that travel, great square hampers, that would be called skips in the north, just long enough to carry the regulation three feet six inches, beyond which a postal parcel must not grow. These travelling skips are gradually being filled from the residential baskets in the wooden cages—

one set of men doing the work of sorting into the baskets, while a junior set collect and bring the appropriate parcels to those who are packing them for their destinations. There is a basket for Chester, another for Edinburgh, another packed with all sorts and shapes destined for the Holyhead mail, which will be unpacked to-morrow in Dublin; there is one packet for Limavaddy. Is there a "Sweet Peg" still living thereabouts, and does she buy her dainty little shoes in Regent Street? Anyhow, we feel that Limavaddy is drawn considerably nearer to us, and becomes all of a sudden more friendly and familiar from the link, between Limavaddy and London, of the parcels post.

And then curiosity and wonder arise, not only at the number of these packages—a number that is being continually increased by the arrival of fresh hampers, charged to the brim with all kinds of parcels—nor merely at the multiplicity of their destinations—for these things are patent, as it were, and on the surface—no, the real biting curiosity is to know what is inside these mysteries in brown paper and string—the answers to the enigmas in paste-board, and cardboard, and millboard, or still more jealously veiled in deal board. If it were only permitted to poke a little hole here, or make a small incision there! But our guide, although anxious to show everything that may lawfully be seen, must not connive at conduct of this prying nature. Still, the corner of the veil may be lifted, and Mentor leads Telemachus to the Parcels' Hospital.

There are no formalities attending admittance to the hospital. The accident ward is open night and day, and there sits the resident surgeon at his operating-table, with hammer and nails, and paper and string, and paste, ready to attend to contusions and fractures, and all the ills of parcel life. A parcel of tennis-balls, which have prematurely burst out of bounds, are soon brought to order under the doctor's skilful hands; but Mrs. Brown's cough-mixture, in a broken medicine bottle, is a more hopeless case. Sausages, too, are something like tennis-balls in their proclivities for breaking forth, and are more difficult to replace in statu quo; and a tin of milk, which gives evidence of a punctured wound, is almost as difficult of treatment.

But this glimpse of the inner life of the parcels post rather stimulates than satisfies curiosity, till official courtesy puts

us in possession of a list which is pretty exhaustive as far as official information goes. All the following articles, anyhow, are in the way of travelling by parcels post, although there may be others still more curious that have made no sign in their passage. The list is alphabetical as it reaches us, but with the aid of our postal authority, we will make a flying classification of its contents.

First of all the comestibles, which include—say for the general breakfast-table—bread warm from the oven, butter that will spread so pleasantly thereon, buns and scones, cream and kippered herrings, cucumbers and their appropriate accompaniment, salmon, in all its states—pickled, fresh, and dried. Then there are soups in jars, fish, oysters, potatoes, eggs, and pork-chops; chickens, ducks, and rabbits; grouse and ham; honey and jam. A sheep's head in paper hails no doubt from North Britain, as a delicate compliment to an exiled compatriot; but an otter's head, stuffed, should surely rather go to the Natural History Department. However, here is a plum-pudding, as a finish to the feast, and wine and whisky, in the way of beverages, with medicines for the morning after, and a plentiful supply of tobacco. There is tea, of course, and coffee.

Here occurs a melancholy interlude. First among the Ds in our list comes a dead cat, a thing grievous in itself, and difficult to classify. Was the dead cat an evil practical joke? A reference to the date of delivery, and the corresponding list of casualties among the parcels deliverers, with the reassuring heading, "Contusions, none," inclines us to think that the cat was taken in good part. So that we will charitably assume that it was sent by its sorrowing mistress to be stuffed—an assumption that clears our way to mark it off, like the otter's head, for "natural history."

Music next furnishes its quota to the parcels post, with fiddle, banjo, concertina, hand-bell, guitar, and tin-whistles, in the charivari of which, dripping-pans, frying-pans, gridirons, saucepans, and other instruments of the cook's orchestra may take a part.

As for the wardrobe, as might be expected, its contingent is a powerful one, including bandboxes with bonnets, and bonnets without bandboxes, and bandboxes pure and simple. There are boots and shoes, both feminine to match the bonnets, and masculine to accompany the clerical

hats ; also appear lay-hats in profusion, and these are as reckless as the bonnets in the matter of emancipation from boxes. A delicate subject in the way of dress improvers must be glided lightly over. Then there are soldiers' helmets, and a cork leg, which is not our old friend of the song, it is to be hoped, still on its travels ; while a straight-waistcoat seems to point a moral of the fate of those who would refine too much in the classification of the parcels post.

To come to a more prosaic list, here are umbrellas, parasols, walking-sticks, shirts, linen, and jewellery ; Welsh woollens and down quilts, and drapery in general in all its ramifications. And, sounding a more masculine note, follow carpenters' rules, T-squares, bricks, machinery, and oil-cans, a pump-handle, a milkman's yoke, a malt-shovel, saws, tools in general, coal-scuttles, and coils of wire, with churns, and chairs, and corks ; but as might almost have been expected—no corkscrew. Then there are alarm-clocks, and augurs three feet long. A pitchfork heads the list of agricultural implements, with spades and shears ; with plants in pots and a beehive ; with chemical manure and sheep's dip.

Children, too, have a share in the parcels post with their toys, the circulation of which will be more active as Christmas comes nearer ; but already the letter-carrier has played the part of Santa Claus, in the way of toys in general, rocking-horses, and wax dolls—washing-dollies, it seems, are not toys at all, but machines for stirring up the wash-tub—and here are tubs for the dollies ; while reverting to the sportive side of things are cricket-bats and wickets, fishing-rods, and tennis bats and balls. Revolvers and swords should keep company with the helmets already mentioned, but one or the other has got misplaced. A horse-collar may suggest a smile, and the splashboard of a dog-cart seems something akin to the collar, while a case of stuffed birds should have gone to the natural history basket. A ship's log is a reminder of Britannia's realm—the wide waste of waters—and, saddest of all parcels, is a little child's coffin.

Then there are tracks already marked out in the general expanse of the parcels post, trade rounds, along which commerce is pressing the way to new developments. Thus Coventry is sending out bicycle and tricycle fittings ; while boots and shoes are distributed far and near from centres of manufacture at Belfast, Bridgewater,

Northampton, and Worcester. Bridgewater distributes packages of its chemical manures, and Barnsley develops a rising and seasonable activity in down quilts. Perth, which rivals the ancient fame of Tyre with its dyed garments, gains increased custom by the agency of our parcels post ; and in the same way the potteries of Stoke-on-Trent send earthenware and tiles all over the kingdom. Then Cardiff, which we thought to be only famous for coal, discovers an unexpected specialty in jams in tin boxes ; while Belfast finds the advantage of the new system in developing its long-established manufacture of linen. Again, there is Wolverhampton with its locks, and Leeds develops what its ancient fame would never lead you to expect. Yes, Leeds develops a startling lead in soap. Cambria, too, asserts itself in flannels, while ancient Chester commends itself to all about to marry, as a perennial source of wedding-cakes. And, lastly, Grimsby closes the list, a list that is destined doubtless to continual expansion, with oyster samples that may be welcomed as a step to the more even distribution of the riches of the deep.

Once more, to dip into the results of official observation, and to satisfy curiosity as to the proportion in which different classes contribute to the number of parcels carried, and we shall find that "private persons," which means the great British public, in its domestic and unofficial character, heads the record with rather more than a fourth of the total. Drapers and milliners run the British public close, while in England boot and shoe makers are not far behind the drapers, and tea is almost as popular as leather. Next come booksellers and stationers, with druggists in close attendance ; while grocers succeed in contributing some five per cent. of the aggregate. After these come an unclassified crowd, embracing almost every trade and profession, whose appropriate figures would run too much into decimals, to find a place in a popular account of the parcels post.

Again as to the number of parcels carried, it will be found that although, when the parcels post was first opened, the number of parcels handed in did not equal the expectations of those most conversant with the subject, yet that ever since, week by week, and month by month, the circulation of parcels has risen with gradual but unchecked increase.

The original official estimate of probable parcels was of twenty-seven millions

annually. The actual result to start with was a circulation of some two hundred and ninety thousand a week, which would give annually only fifteen millions of parcels. But the circulation of parcels has now risen to close upon four hundred thousand weekly, which is equivalent to a yearly twenty millions and more. This is the result of three months' working only, and at a similar rate of increase by the end of the first year of working, the weekly circulation should be over eight hundred thousand, which even an elementary acquaintance with arithmetic will show to be equivalent to a yearly circulation of upwards of forty millions. So that nothing more than the present rate of progress is necessary to make the parcels post a conspicuous success. The gradual increase of parcels carried is fairly distributed over the kingdom; the country contributes to the increase even more in proportion than London; the actual figures being in London a circulation to begin with of eighty-three thousand parcels, now risen to one hundred and eighteen thousand parcels received and delivered weekly, while in the country—England only—the circulation has risen from sixty-one to a hundred thousand each week. It is satisfactory, too, to note the same gradual but decided increase in Irish parcels, while again, contrary to expectations, Scotland shows a less rapid development of parcels traffic.

But it is the general opinion outside official circles, that a still more satisfactory result would be obtained by the adoption of a system of registration of parcels. Probably the great bulk of large firms have held aloof from the Post Office enterprise, because the railway companies give them a signature for all parcels delivered to them, whereas the Post Office gives no acknowledgment of any kind, and in the economy of a large firm the proof that a certain packet has been actually delivered to the carrying agents is of the greatest importance, apart from any question as to liability for loss or damage. But the Post Office officials consider that an acknowledgment of receipt is equivalent to registration, and demands equal care in the subsequent progress of the parcel to its destination, so that it may be traced at any point; and these precautions are obviously almost impossible with the great bulk of parcels. However, we are informed that a congress of Post Office experts has been sitting at Tunbridge Wells and has had this point in especial consideration.

And, after all, it is satisfactory to think that the success which has so far attended the parcels post is due chiefly to the opening out of new rills and streams of traffic, affording an outlet here and an inlet there, all tending to increase the comfort and well-being of those concerned; of the general mass, that is, of traders and workers, as well as of the world in general that for the first time since the dawn of history finds itself in a position to send anything it likes, to relations, to friends, to daughters at service, to boys at school, to sweethearts, to all the rest of the world, in fact, without the trouble of a preliminary investigation as to ways and means of sending.

But while we have been engaged, perhaps not with much success, in a sort of classification of the parcels post, the actual workers about us, the company of men and boys, have been busy about the long rows of baskets, each of the company knowing what he has got to do, and sticking to it with praiseworthy directness, while from a rostrum above the crowd, like a schoolmaster's desk, the superintendent keeps an eye on the progress made. The two great divisions, it seems, the hemispheres into which the world of parcels is divided, are Roadborne and Railborne; the former are those which can be reached by the official vans and omnibuses which are waiting outside, in the space where once the mail-coaches were used to assemble, you will remember. As for the railborne these comprise at present parcels from most of the district offices which are sent here to be forwarded. But the policy of the office is to decentralise as far as possible, and encourage a local circulation. At the present time, for instance, a parcel from Peckham for Perth will go to St. Martin's-le-Grand in the first instance, but this will not necessarily be the case when the Euston dépôt is in full work. Then there will be another large central office on the site of old St. Thomas's Hospital, on the Surrey side of the water, and for the western districts, the scarlet vans congregate about the railings of the gardens of Leicester Square, where the once forlorn-looking buildings occupied by a defunct soi-disant co-operative society have been converted into a parcels dépôt.

The staff who have been engaged to work the new system are engaged under the same regulations as in the letter branch. There is no essential difference in age, pay, or treatment between the parcel deliverer and the ordinary letter-

carrier, and it is intended to make their duties interchangeable. Neither has there been any preference shown to army reserve men or retired soldiers, as was hoped by some would be the case. Where such men have been otherwise eligible they have been taken, but not in preference to other candidates, nor have the regulations as to age been further relaxed in their favour.

However, there will be sufficient occasion in the future for the soldiers' friends to urge their claims for employment, as for some time to come, probably, the staff will continue to increase with increase of business. We may look forward to a foreign parcels post, with the convenience of forwarding parcels to any part of the Continent at a small increase on inland rates. Already a parcels post exists in Germany, France, Belgium, Holland, and Italy, and the difficulty of uniting the various systems in a parcels union would rest, not so much with the postal authorities, as with the vexatious regulations of foreign custom-houses. As long as our neighbours' frontiers bristle with hostile tariffs, complications would be likely to check any active parcel traffic. But in the case of India and our colonies, the farther England beyond the seas, the extension of a parcels post to these regions is only a matter of time. And great would be the benefit arising both for the mother country and the colonies in such increased means of communication, which would strengthen the feeling of a common nationality, and the ties of kindred. Letters after a time drop off, even between members of the same family, when the scenes of daily life are so utterly different as in an English and a colonial home. But a parcel from home, what a treat to be enjoyed by settlers in the bush, or farmers on the sides of the Rocky Mountains! The little shoes that grannie has knitted for the last comer, the genuine butter-scotch for Tommie, the real Sheffield blade, the dainty boots, the gloves of the latest pattern, and the knick-knacks in which the feminine heart delights. How much more than mere written words do such things keep up the feeling of nearness and kinship! And in return how we prize the little curios we receive from foreign lands, the moccasins embroidered by an Indian squaw, the pouch adorned with porcupine quills, the pipe that has been smoked in an Indian wigwam. And all this without trouble and at slight expense, and associated with the double-knock of the parcel postman.

But, in the meantime, there is a great down-draught of the chill upper air, a trap-door opens overhead, and in the opening appears the wistful muzzle of a patient-looking horse, while in the confused yellow light from the twinkling lamps in the slightly foggy world outside, can be seen an array of men and horses and vehicles, while trucks are racing about, and huge hampers are whirled upwards.

By the way, if one of the said hampers should happen to be only partly full, what is to prevent its contents from dashing wildly to and fro in the transit? Our guide soon explains the matter. He takes us to a half empty hamper, within which is a moveable cover, that slides freely up and down, and is secured by a strap tightly on the top of the contents, whether few or many. Then, when sticks, umbrellas, fishing-rods, and other long and fragile things are in question, they are placed on the top of the moveable lid, and underneath the strap.

One other matter excites curiosity. Each sorter has a compartment marked "blind." Now why should it be blind? Oh, it is the parcel that is blind, explains our guide, if it should happen that the sorter cannot read the address. But then, although there may be a blind parcel now and then, it does not happen often, and an obstinate case would be sent to the blind asylum upstairs, where the blind letters are examined. There are dozens of blind letters every night, but among parcels the disease is rarer. The reason of this is that letters are pitched into the boxes by anybody, whether directed legibly or not, but that a parcel is handed over the counter, and the address read by the clerk who takes it in. That difficulty being settled, it occurs to us to ask in a similar spirit to the question addressed by the landlord to the bagman in *Pickwick*, What becomes of the dead parcels?

Well, the dead parcels go to the Dead Letter Office, not in this building at all, but in Founder's Court, Lothbury, in fact they are treated just as letters are treated—opened, and if there is any evidence of where they come from, returned to the sender. In case of a duck, for instance, or a partridge, which might happen to make things unpleasant in the Dead Letter Office, why there would be an inquest and an order for burial without undue delay. But in a general way ducks and partridges do not go a begging.

By this time the night's parcels are pretty well cleared, the railborne parcels have been carted away in the big railway vans, and the roadborne are also, most of them, on the way to the suburbs, where, at Richmond, at Kingston, at Hampstead, at Hackney, at all the outlying districts round about, the sharp postman's knock will soon be heard, announcing the evening delivery of the parcels post.

As for the railborne parcels that will soon be flying to all corners of the kingdom, we can see them in imagination pursuing their way to their respective addresses on the morrow in all kinds of conveyances. In the large towns, such as Manchester, Liverpool, and Birmingham, they will travel in small, neat omnibuses like those already familiar in our London streets; in smaller towns they will jog along in hand-carts and perambulators. And Sweet Peg will get her parcel at Lima-vaddy, arriving, probably, on a low-backed car, just about this same hour to-morrow, all in ample time for her to dance at Tim Sheehan's wedding, in the little glass slippers that this latest development of the fairy godmother shall have brought her, straight from the fairyland of Regent Street, over land and sea.

All these things work freely and easily enough now that the machine has once been started, but the outside world has little idea of the pains and contrivance that have been expended in its inauguration, where everything was new and untried, and a complete system had to be modelled. A code of rules had to be hammered out, rules that must fit all possible cases, sufficient for the guidance of the most extensive dépôt, and yet not superfluous in the smallest country receiving-house. The authors of this laborious compilation, however, had the advantage often denied to those of more purely literary compositions, in being assured of a good circulation for their work, in respect of the fifteen thousand parcel centres already existing, and bound to take a copy. That the Post Office is well and zealously served in its higher ranks, goes without saying, but it is satisfactory to find that all through the service everybody has taken to the youngest of the official children, and that from its first entrance into life, there have been no dangerous crises to pass through, and that, on the whole, everything has gone smoothly and well from the very first in the career of the parcels post.

RABELAIS AND BRUSQUET.

WE remarked at the end of our notice of *Triboulet the Fool*,* that Rabelais would have played the part of court jester to perfection. To those acquainted with the famous histories of Gargantua and Pantagruel, this is a truism, but the majority of our readers know very little about them. Nor is this wonderful, for the mixture of obscenity, obscurity, satire, allusion, burlesque, and nonsense might have been written purposely to repel the reader. Illustrators, commentators, and critics have been engaged on the book for three hundred years, and have been unable to say whether it has a meaning or not. How, then, can an ordinary reader expect to appreciate it? Unless one has an extensive acquaintance with the history of the kingdom, the literature, the religion, the controversies of the period, it must always appear the most absurd rubbish. We will therefore take the man himself and recall certain of the anecdotes which have been handed down by tradition. Whether these are true or false is not the question here, but if they are not true, they deserve to be, and it must be remembered that we do not assert; we merely repeat.

In early life Rabelais entered the Cordeliers of Fontenay le Comte in Poitou, taking, as has been observed, "the vows of ignorance still more than those of religion." In fact, the convent was the last place in the world where intelligence penetrated. Notwithstanding his uncongenial surroundings, or rather, perhaps, in consequence of them, he applied himself diligently to the study of the literature of all ages and countries, and thus laid the foundation of that vast amount of erudition which has been the admiration of all his commentators. Here, too, was nurtured that hatred of monks which is no less conspicuous than his learning. As a relaxation from severe studies, he allowed himself the utmost license in respect of practical jokes directed against his brother friars, in which were displayed to their full extent that coarseness of feeling, speech, and action which is the well-known characteristic of that age. Of all these jokes we need only mention the last, in which our jester most certainly had not the laugh on his side. On the fête day of the convent it was the long-established custom for

* ALL THE YEAR ROUND, New Series, Vol. 32, p. 328, "Triboulet the Fool."

the peasantry to flock with their prayers and offerings to the image of St. Francis, which was placed in a dark corner of the chapel. Our friar took the trouble to take this down from its niche and place himself there—made up, of course, to resemble it. But the absurdity of the speeches and actions of the rustic worshippers was too much for his gravity. An involuntary movement escaped him, to the awe of the adorers, who called out, "A miracle! a miracle!" In the midst of the excitement which speedily arose, an old monk, suspecting something wrong, hastened to enquire by actual inspection. The culprit was dragged down, deprived of his clothes, beaten with girdles of cords till the blood came, and finally, for the sacrilegious act, sentenced to four walls and bread-and-water for the rest of his days. He had, however, during his fifteen years' stay, made many powerful friends outside, and through their intercession his punishment was remitted and he was set at liberty. After this, we need not be surprised to find that change of scene was deemed necessary. Abandoning the clerical life, he studied medicine, and was admitted doctor at Montpellier, where, and at Lyons, he practised with success.

The Chancellor Duprat, for some reason or other of which we are ignorant, had caused the revocation of the privileges of the University of Montpellier, and Rabelais was sent to Paris to intercede on its behalf.

On his arrival there, doubtful of having an audience of the great man in his own name and on declaration of his business, he thought it better to try stratagem. He therefore addressed the porter in Latin, who, ignorant of the language, naturally brought some person to whom it was known. Him, however, our doctor addressed in Greek, and when a Grecian was procured, he was favoured with a speech in Hebrew, and so on, till the Chancellor being informed of this extraordinary visitor, ordered him to be sent up. The result, as we may imagine, was that his request was granted.

In remembrance of this, the University of Montpellier ordered that everyone on taking his doctor's degree should put on the cloak of Rabelais, and this is shown and the ceremony observed to this day.

He made two journeys to Rome as doctor and attaché of embassy under Cardinal Jean du Bellay, an old schoolfellow and lifelong protector. Here, if we are to credit

tradition, he behaved with such irreverence as to excite all the religious against him. It is related that at an audience the Pope told him to ask for what he liked, and thereupon he immediately desired to be excommunicated. On the reason of this extraordinary request being asked for, he told his holiness that he came from a village suspected of heresy, where many, and even some of his own family, had been burnt. He remembered that on his way to Rome the party was benighted, and had to take shelter in a cottage, where an old woman did her best to light a fire. Not succeeding, however, she remarked that the wood must have been cursed by the Pope's own mouth. This being the case he trusted his holiness would by word of mouth render him free from danger at the stake. We need not wonder that Rabelais had to quit Rome in a hurry. Finding himself at Lyons without funds, and anxious to get to Paris, he prepared some bottles on which he wrote: "Poison for the King," "Poison for the Queen," etc., etc., was arrested, and sent to Paris at the public expense. Arrived there he asked to have audience of the king, the bottles were produced, and the poisons swallowed by the author of the joke. One day a beautiful lamprey being brought to table on a silver dish at the seat of the Cardinal du Bellay, he, in his capacity of physician, uttered the words, "difficult of digestion," and the dish was untouched by all. Our doctor, however, applied himself to it with eagerness, and when questioned as to the difference between his principles and his practice, he replied that he never heard of anyone doubting that silver dishes were indigestible. He is reported to have made his will in these words: "I have nothing, I owe much, the rest I leave to the poor." Even as to his death the story is current that he wrapped himself up in a domino, "Blessed are they who die in Domino."

Bonaventure des Periers tells us of a rival to Triboulet, but does not give his name, or state whether his duties were official. It was he who at a time when the king was at his wit's-end to raise money told him, that as he had already sold many places tenable for a period he had better do the same with his own, and he would very soon find himself in funds. The bibliophile Jacob makes him to be one Villemanoché, who had a mania for believing himself one of a certain illustrious family named Pichelin, for whom he drew up an elaborate

genealogy, showing their descent from all the royal houses of Europe. With this in his hand he went round asking to wife all the greatest heiresses of the court, demonstrating the necessity of perpetuating the Pichelin family.

Triboulet's successor was the Brusquet so well known to students of the literature of that period. This name was applied to him on account of his character and humour from the Italian *brusco*, converted into *brusque* for the French, which in the fifteenth century borrowed largely from Latin and Greek, and became Italianised in the sixteenth through the influence of the Medicis. This name was evidently a sobriquet, and the researches of M. Jal have resulted in discovering an entry in the royal household expenses for 1559 of seven and a half ells of black cloth to Jean Antoine Lambert, called Brusquet, valet de chambre to the late king. Brantôme eulogises him heartily: "I believe if any one had taken the trouble to collect his bonmots, stories, tricks, and pranks, we should have had a book such as we never have had nor ever will have." We do not, however, hear so much of his repartees as of his practical jokes, and Brantôme goes into tedious detail of the continual rivalry between him and the Maréchal Strozzi in this mediæval form of wit. All of these nowadays we should say were beyond a joke, and it may be imagined to what extent they were carried when Strozzi, receiving a messenger from Rome, where Brusquet then was, with news that the jester was dead, caused his wife to marry the messenger a month afterwards, Brusquet being at that moment on his way back to Paris. We are told that he was pleasing without being a bore, for he never said the same thing twice, a remark which most of us would do well to take to heart. Brantôme's story is that Brusquet was a Provençal, and first appeared at the camp of Avignon in 1536. There he counterfeited the profession of a surgeon, and made much money by attending to the Swiss and the lansquenets, some of whom he cured by accident, and the others he sent to their fathers like flies. In fact, the great mortality caused enquiry to be made. He was found out, and the constable was for hanging him. But tales of his wit coming to the hearing of head-quarters, he was brought before the Dauphin, who was so charmed with him that proceedings were stopped, and he was relieved of his surgical functions. He is said to have observed, apropos of his patients, "They

don't complain, and they are cured of the fever for good," a remark of which the truth was undeniable. This introduction turned out to his advantage; he was made valet of the wardrobe, then valet de chambre, and at last posting-master of Paris, in which berth he feathered his nest well, for he could charge what he liked, as at that time no other carriages were to be got, and no relays of horses, as afterwards. The following gives us an idea of the manners of the period. The Cardinal of Lorraine went to Brussels in 1559 to sign the peace with the Duke of Alba. Brusquet was in his suite and made much money, and jested with the King of Spain, who admired him hugely, for he was a better buffoon even in Italian and Spanish than in French. But not content with the king's money and friendship, one feast-day, when Madame de Lorraine and a host of great nobles and ladies were dining to celebrate the signature of peace, Brusquet, just before the cloth was being removed, jumped on the table, and wrapping the table-cloth round him, rolled from one end to the other, carrying with him everything in his way. Arrived at the end he stood on the floor, but could hardly walk for the weight of things he had about him, but was allowed to go out by order of the king, who laughed immoderately, and found the proceeding so good, witty, and clever, that he was willing he should have everything. It was astonishing that he was not hurt by the knives, but a special good-fortune looks after children and fools.

Henry was anxious one day to fix on a captain to whom he should entrust the capture of a certain town. "Oh," said Brusquet, "give it to So-and-so"—a judge suspected of being open to bribes—"he takes everything."

Here is another extraordinary illustration of the manners of that age.

The queen had long wished to see Brusquet's wife, and at last the day of audience was arranged. The jester had of course instructed his wife as to her behaviour, informing her that the queen was very deaf, and she must, therefore, speak up. He had, moreover, told the queen that his wife had the same infirmity. The situation can therefore be seen at once. After performing her reverence, the woman bawled out, "God bless your majesty!" the queen made some observation at the top of her voice, the woman continued in the same tone. If the queen was loud, the woman was still louder, and very soon

there was a noise which might be heard in the court of the Louvre. Strozzi, who was about, came up to put all to rights, but Brusquet had already told his wife that the marshal was deafer even than the queen, and she must speak into his ear, and as loud as she could, which she did accordingly. Strozzi, suspecting some trick, looked out of a window, saw a trumpeter, and calling him up, gave him a couple of crowns, and told him to blow his trumpet into the woman's ear till he was told to stop. Then again entering the chamber, Strozzi said to the queen: "This woman is deaf, I can cure her." Thereupon he held her fast while the trumpeter blew and blew till the poor woman's ears were cracked, and her brains addled, and it was many months before she recovered. Thus Brusquet had to shout himself to his wife as he had tried to make others do to her.

Brantôme says he could go on for ever. If Strozzi was sharp, subtle, ingenious, and clever, Brusquet was his equal in point of ingenuity. He was declared to be the first man for buffoonery that ever was, or ever will be, whether in speaking, acting, writing, or inventing, and everything without offending or displeasing.

Brusquet, it is sad to say, fell a victim to the religious differences of the time. He was suspected of a leaning towards the Huguenots, was accused of delaying the king's packets and despatches, was disgraced, and lost most of his fortune, and his house was pillaged in the first troubles of 1562. After this he took refuge, first with Madame de Bouillon, and afterwards with the Duchess of Valentinois, at whose château of Anet he died some time after 1565.

JENIFER.

BY ANNIE THOMAS (MRS. PENDER-CUDLIP).

CHAPTER XXXI. A BASKET OF EGGS.

CAPTAIN EDGECUMB knew the little woman better than his wife did, and from the moment he saw her established at Kildene he felt that it was her intention to marry the owner of Kildene and his to frustrate it.

Not that he had any malignant or even unfriendly feeling towards Mrs. Hatton. On the contrary, though he had liked her better, he still liked her very much indeed, and he would have been delighted to see her well married to any other man than Jenifer's godfather. At

this he drew the line. Kildene should not be diverted away from Jenifer through any little charms or lures of Mrs. Hatton.

And that lady knew him instinctively to be a foe to her purpose the moment Admiral Tullamore exclaimed that Jenifer was his godchild.

"She would never interfere with me, she's too independent and straightforward," Mrs. Hatton told herself, doing unconscious homage to Jenifer's superiority by the thought. "But he will—if he can!"

After all, her purpose at present was not exactly what Captain Edgecumb thought. She meant to make herself essential at every turn to the old man, to wind herself about his daily path, and every thought, but she did not mean to marry him. She desired to have Kildene, and to take his name, and to be known as his adopted daughter and heiress, and to leave behind all trace of Mrs. Hatton. But she did not mean to marry him, unless she were compelled to do so by the interference of others.

She had so completely assumed the reins, she had so thoroughly impressed Admiral Tullamore with the idea that he could do nothing unaided by her counsel, and that he was desperately dull and lonely when she was out of his presence, that she thought at first that it would be mere child's play to circumvent Captain Edgecumb and keep him from holding private converse with the admiral. But Captain Edgecumb wanted Kildene almost as much as she did, and was almost as ready to intrigue for it.

Never to leave the old man alone with Captain Edgecumb became a fixed idea with her from the hour in which Captain Edgecumb entered the house. To be alone with the old man long enough to win his confidence became a fixed idea of Captain Edgecumb's about the same time.

In such a contest it was hard to say which would win. Time was on Mrs. Hatton's side if Captain Edgecumb did not get the opportunity of undermining her during his brief visit.

"I've made it a rule to sit with the admiral while he takes his wine after dinner," she said to Jenifer the first evening of their arrival at Kildene; "shall we keep to my rule while you're here?"

"Undoubtedly if you wish it," Jenifer said politely, so the ladies sat on after dinner, "as usual," Mrs. Hatton said, with her sweetest smile, till it was time to go to the drawing-room for tea and music.

"So you're going to be a second Grisi, I hear, my dear," the admiral said to Jenifer.

"I must hear you sing; you always had a sweet pipe, I remember, at Moor Royal."

So to give her old friend pleasure Jenifer sat down and sang, and her husband stood by her with a proud air of ownership about him.

Presently Mrs. Hatton got her low stool, and plumped herself down upon it in an engagingly confiding and youthful attitude at the old admiral's feet.

"I'm no one now," she whispered softly; "if your dear goddaughter stays you'll soon find you can do very well without poor little me."

"She's not going to stay long, worse luck," he said bluntly. Then he added very kindly: "I don't think I shall ever be able to do without you, my dear; you mustn't take that foolish notion into your head."

She took his hand and fondled it, and made her eyes swim with grateful tears, and altogether did a very touching little bit of business. Unfortunately Captain Edgecumb turned round and caught her at it, and smiled in a meaning way that made her hate him.

However, she was a very wary woman, skilled in the art of concealing her feelings. Poor woman! the necessity for doing so had been in a measure forced upon her at one period of her career, and the habit had become second nature. So now she smiled back upon Captain Edgecumb, and appeared to be quite gaily glad that he should see how happily and surely she was established under the paternal wing of this kind old man.

But this suave conciliatory manner did not for an instant disarm Captain Edgecumb, or do away with his determination to frustrate her little game if he could do so without descending to trickery.

For example, he made up his mind that when the ladies retired for the night he would sit up for an hour, and over an invigorating cigar and supporting glass of grog with the old sailor, expatiate on the injustice of Mr. Ray's will in leaving Jenifer penniless. He would then let fall a few sentences relative to the extreme precariousness of such a professional life as Jenifer was about to lead. And when these well-seasoned remarks had permeated Admiral Tullamore's system, the old gentleman should be suffered to go to bed, and dwell upon the subject in the watches of the night.

But in contemplating doing this he reckoned without Mrs. Hatton. When the

reasonable hour of eleven arrived that lady ordered in hot water and glasses, and other ingredients which are essentials to the compounding of a glass of grog. And when she had herself mixed a potent goblet for the admiral, she whispered to Mrs. Edgecumb that their "dear friend liked to get away to his own room at this hour, and that she (Mrs. Hatton) felt sure Mrs. Edgecumb would not wish him to deviate from his rule."

So on Jenifer earnestly entreating that he would pursue exactly the same course as if they were not there, the admiral was quietly sent away to bed, and Captain Edgecumb felt that he would never be given that opportunity over the quiet cigar which he had intended turning to profitable account.

"That little woman means mischief," Captain Edgecumb said to his wife that night.

"What mischief?" Jenifer asked with indifference.

"What mischief?" he mimicked. "Anyone who wasn't blind as a mole, or wilfully obtuse, would see at a glance what she's aiming at. She means to get the old boy's money by hook or by crook; she'll marry him one fine day, before you have time to look round."

Jenifer could not help the tone of fine disdain which tinged her answer:

"Why should I trouble myself to look round at all at such a matter?"

"Oh, it's all very well to be high-falutin' and superior to worldly considerations when you're running in single harness, but your interests are mine now, remember, and I'll take good care that they're looked after."

He used an expletive to strengthen his meaning, and Jenifer had never had one uttered at her before. She had great powers of reasoning and endurance, but she could not help remembering that she had very lately vowed to "honour" and "obey" this man. Already she had ceased to do the one; and if he ever attempted to make her do a mean thing, she would revolt, and refuse to do the other. It was pathetic to be disillusioned so soon. "But to know the truth is better than to be in happy ignorance." So she told herself, and tried to find strength and peace in the reflection.

As far as shooting and fishing were concerned, Captain Edgecumb had it all his own way at Kildene. As far as intercourse

with Admiral Tullamore went, Mrs. Hatton had it all her way, and Jenifer's interests were no further advanced by her husband when he left than when he entered the house.

But once in an unguarded moment, when Jenifer had been singing to him for an hour, the old admiral exclaimed in a burst of grateful fervour:

"Thank you, my dear, thank you; your voice is a fortune to you, but at the same time I'm happy to tell you there's another in store for you."

"This must mean that he will leave her his property?" Captain Edgecumb thought. But it only meant that there was some property left to Jenifer already, of which the admiral was cognisant.

It was an intense relief to Mrs. Hatton when the day came for the Edgecumbs to leave Kildene; not that she feared Captain Edgecumb any longer. She had the admiral too completely under her control for that. But the task of incessantly watching and keeping guard over the latter became wearisome to a woman who had a profound sense of enjoyment, and who could find the latter in a thousand ways in the solitudes of beautiful Kildene.

To ride about on a quiet little cob, and superintend the planting out of new plantations, the making of new gardens, the reorganisation of old ones, to give orders with the air and authority of a mistress, these were rare pleasures to Mrs. Hatton. And Admiral Tullamore encouraged and delighted in her doing it, and took pride in her fresh, unrestrained pride in the beautiful place of which she was soon the virtual ruler.

"I wish he'd adopt me, and let me call myself 'Tullamore,' and leave the hateful name of Hatton behind me for ever."

But when Admiral Tullamore proposed that she should take his honoured name, it was as his wife, not as his adopted child, that he asked her to take it.

For a few hours she hesitated in doubt and dread, in fear and shame.

Then the thought of the happy, beautiful home, of the perfect peace and immunity from worry of every kind which she would secure by marrying him, overpowered her doubts and scruples, and she made up her mind to dare all, and win all.

After all, she was safe. Josiah Whittler, the actor with a name and a fair reputation at stake, had assured her that he was at the death and burial of her husband. He could never venture to play such a foul

and dangerous game after this, as to assert that he had lied, and that her husband was still alive.

She hesitated just long enough to make the old man fear that he had shocked and disgusted her by wanting to make her his wife. Regarded from his standpoint she looked so young, so innocent and attractive, and generally simple-minded, that he feared she would think him coarse and selfish in wishing to unite her youth to his age. And all the time she was longing—yet fearing—to take the shield and buckler of his name, and to put away the identity of Mrs. Hatton in an undiscoverable grave.

The chances of Mr. Whittler ever hearing that his late friend's widow had buried her dead, and married again, seemed ridiculously small. The actor's life would assuredly be lived in cities, in crowded haunts of men. It was not upon the cards at all that he would ever come in contact with anyone, who could tell him that an old gentleman, living in retirement in County Kerry, had committed the folly of marrying his lady-housekeeper. The subject was one that could never, by any possibility, be mooted in any society in which Mr. Whittler found himself. So she argued with herself, and her arguments prevailed, and she made the old admiral a happy man by accepting him.

Meantime the Edgecumbs had gone back to town, and begun their new life in their new home.

"I wish we had the place to ourselves for a few days, don't you, Jenifer?" her husband asked as they were driving from the station.

She was thinking so much and so lovingly of the approaching meeting with her mother there, that she did not grasp his meaning, and said:

"Have what place to ourselves?"

"Our own home, to be sure."

"So we shall."

Seclusion with him had not proved so delightful that she could contemplate its continuance rapturously.

"No, we sha'n't; your mother will be there, and I shall feel as if it were more her house than mine."

"Poor mother!"

"Why do you sigh about her in that way, Jenifer? It isn't every man, let me tell you, who would have acceded to the proposition of his mother-in-law starting with him in his married life. I conceded the point, thinking to make you happy, and now you call her 'poor mother,' and

sigh about her as if I had been unkind to her. It's very discouraging."

Jenifer made no reply. Her throat seemed to be closing up, and she knew that the effort to speak would relax her control over her tears. So she kept silence and peace.

Captain Edgecumb recovered his temper by the time they got home, and, if he felt any chagrin at the presence of others besides the servants in the house, he contrived to conceal it. Perhaps this was partly due to the presence of his sister, Mrs. Archibald Campbell.

"I thought you'd like to see one member of your family here on your arrival, Harry," she said as she kissed her brother, "and so I've been spending a quiet pleasant evening with Mrs. Ray, who's about one of the sweetest women I ever met."

This she said when Mrs. Ray and Jenifer had gone upstairs for the young mistress of the house to take off her travelling-gear.

"You know I'm always glad to see you, Belle. As for Mrs. Ray being the sweetest woman you have ever met, I'm not so sure about that. She'll be rather a nuisance here, I'm afraid. Jenifer has an idea that everything and everyone must give way to her mother."

"How unnatural!" Mrs. Campbell said dryly.

"Oh, it's right enough, of course. I'm not saying a word against that feeling, only it's likely to be a bore to me. I want Jenifer to devote all her time and energy to her profession. Great interests are at stake, and she must strain every nerve to secure them."

"Don't let her strain her nerves too much, Harry, and don't build too much on her professional success. I have heard a dozen amateurs sing as well as, or better than she does, and I've seen them break down when they came before the public."

"Jenifer won't break down. I shall not let her worry herself about the business part of the matter. I shall make her engagements, arrange terms, and——"

"Take the money," his sister laughed. "Well, you wouldn't do it if I were in Jenifer's place. Moreover, how will you get the time to do it? There are some duties attaching to your secretaryship, I suppose?"

"I've resigned that."

"Oh, Harry!"

"Jenifer's business arrangements are of paramount importance, as I've told you before, and I mean to look after them closely."

"Archie will be disgusted with you."

"He is perfectly at liberty to be as disgusted as he likes. I know I am doing wisely; when through her talent, or rather through my management of her talent, Jenifer makes a large fortune, you'll admit I'm right."

"When she does, I will!" Mrs. Campbell said sadly enough, for she was woman enough to feel that Jenifer had gone into bondage and slavery to a hard and exacting taskmaster.

The programmes and posters of the concert at which Jenifer was to make her début were out, and Jenifer was down for two solos, and to sing in a quartette with a famous contralto, a thundering bass, and an irreproachable tenor. She was to appear under her maiden-name, Jenifer Ray, and already the sight of it in print made her nervous.

The night came. She had been practising assiduously with Madame Voglio since her return from Ireland, and her kind-hearted instructress had given her both splendid teaching and encouragement.

"If you do what you can you'll have a grand success," she said, as Jenifer's turn came, and she prepared to ascend the steps and go upon the stage, on which she would be the one object on whom the attention and gaze of the vast multitude assembled in the hall would be concentrated.

Another moment and she stood alone, blinded by nervousness and the dazzling light. But the last words of encouragement from Madame Voglio came to her aid. She gave the signal nod to the accompanist, and began her song.

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Mr. Tuck blinked blankly, with a hypochondriac misgiving that the shock of the accident had affected his brain.

"Well," resumed the widow, with an assumption of yet deeper offence in her voice and manner, "you will perhaps believe me if I repeat the words of your own letter to Mr. Upcher, describing your wedding. You said that you wished Mr. Upcher could have married you quietly, as there was a great crowd, and you were late, and your bride was nearly knocked down before you arrived; that the licence and fees amounted to twenty guineas, which you thought a good deal; and that you would return with your bride to The Keep on Friday, as by then the drawing-room would be ready for her reception. There!" triumphantly.

Gradually it dawned on Mr. Tuck that "that fool of an Upcher had made a joke of his letter as he always did of everything, making use of it to hoax Mrs. Cassidy." His first thought upon this becoming clear to him was one of thankfulness that his accident had not turned his brain; his next, one of perplexity. Should he confess his compromising bachelorhood to the widow, and thus lose the services of an expert in mortification?

But the widow had no idea of allowing him to decide this for himself. She read his thoughts to the letter, and hastened to prevent a confession which would in a moment upset her plans.

"There, Mr. Tuck, I shall not say, or ask you to say, another word. I shall not force your confidence. No, no, not a word," as Mr. Tuck made an effort to speak. "I'm not offended. I shall not leave you. I shall do what I can for you. But pray let it be understood, once for all, that I'm not trying to worm myself into your confidence under the pretext of nursing you. If you will let this be understood, Mr. Tuck, and not mention the subject again, I shall feel free to do you what little service I can."

This was lofty, and into this fine vein the widow always relapsed upon Mr. Tuck's making the most distant approach to the tabooed subject.

Mr. Tuck felt, first of all, the relief of a weak man in having a bad quarter of an hour postponed. Then, he felt admiration of the widow's magnanimity, and, lastly and chiefly, he felt—he could not help feeling—gratitude for her disinterested affection. It was certain now that she attended him out of the purest attachment to his person.

So far from having any matrimonial design upon him, she would on no account have compromised herself by her devotion to him if she had not been assured of his marriage. Beyond question she had the virtue of charity as Mr. Tuck understood it; and Mr. Tuck understood it in the one-sided sense in which it was understood by the disciple of the Persian sage, who hearing from his master a discourse on charity, was so transported by it that he rushed forth to beg from the first man he met.

But, besides this excellent gift of charity, Mrs. Cassidy had another recommendation of great price in the eyes of Mr. Tuck. She was an incomparable companion. It was not that she was good-humoured, good-tempered, good-natured, and amusing. She was all these; but she was more than all these put together—she was sympathising. She was—to use her own simile—the most perfect mirror in which Mr. Tuck had ever viewed himself. She reflected every mood and echoed every word, not mechanically, tiresomely, or transparently, but with "infinite variety."

Mr. Tuck experienced some such pleasure as the poet Bunn must have felt, on hearing his bald librettos set to exquisite music.

Now Mr. Tuck, even when well, thought the echoes of his own groans the sweetest music in the world. How much sweeter now did they sound!

"How sickness enlarges the dimensions of a man's self to himself! He is his own exclusive object. Supreme selfishness is inculcated upon him as his only duty. 'Tis the Two Tables of the Law to him. He has nothing to think of but how to get well. . . . He has put on the strong armour of sickness, he is wrapped in the callous hide of suffering; he keeps his sympathy, like some curious vintage, under trusty lock and key, for his own use only. He lies pitying himself, honing and moaning to himself; he yearneth over himself; his bowels are even melted within him, to think what he suffers; he is not ashamed to weep over himself. He compassionates himself all over; and his bed is a very discipline of humanity and tender heart. He is his own sympathiser, and instinctively feels that none can so well perform the office for him."

With the exception of this last sentence, Mr. Tuck, as an invalid, is drawn here to the life, and without the exaggeration humorously intended by Lamb. But Lamb's invalid, with his "punctual and

unmoved old nurse," could have no idea of the solace of the sympathy of such a woman as Mrs. Cassidy. Even Mr. Tuck's own sympathy for himself toiled after hers, panting, but in vain.

Will it be thought incredible that after a fortnight's experience of such devotion, Mr. Tuck should fall in love?

In love, of course, as Narcissus loved. In love with himself as flatteringly reflected in Mrs. Cassidy. For that which, according to Rochefoucauld, counts much with all lovers, counted all with him: "*Ce qui fait que les amants et les maîtresses ne s'ennuient point d'être ensemble, c'est qu'ils parlent toujours d'eux mêmes.*" Mrs. Cassidy could speak for ever, and he could for ever listen to the one engrossing topic—himself.

In truth, it was, perhaps, less a love-affair than a sublimated friendship of the Aristotlian kind, "one soul in two bodies"—only the soul was the exclusive soul of Mr. Tuck. And Mrs. Cassidy was an admirable alter idem in this, as in other things—she had a frugal mind. She was so earnest about minimising the hotel expenses, and ingenious in suggesting economies, that Mr. Tuck began to regard a union with her rather as a saving than as an extravagance. Nor, lastly, should we forget to mention that Mrs. Cassidy was a beauty of the buxom sort—

Buxom, blithe, and debonair.

In fact, each of the motives to marriage Bacon suggests to youth, middle-age, and old age, united together to reconcile Mr. Tuck to that honourable estate.

Now let us look for a moment at Mrs. Cassidy's side of the question. She is no coarse adventuress playing a deep game for high stakes. If she was neither a very refined or a very straightforward person, neither was she very base or very deep. Good-nature and a keen delight in the ludicrous had as much to do with her attentions to Mr. Tuck as any subtle scheme to entrap him into marriage. At first she had no such definite design at all. She owed both its suggestion and its success to unforeseen circumstances.

And here let us say, in the spirit of the shrewd Italian proverb:

*Di danari, di senno, e di fede
O' è ne manco che non credi,*

that a man who succeeds in any enterprise, whether of ambition, matrimony, or murder, is too often credited with foresight from the first, not only of the goal, but of

every intermediate step to it. Whereas in most cases, he has been carried by circumstances half, or more than half, the way towards this goal before even he himself has seen it.

This at least was true of Mrs. Cassidy. She was well into the stream, and was swept half-way across by it before she saw the land at the other side. Then, it is true, she made for it, though not very vigorously even then.

To tell the truth, her heart sometimes failed her, and she was in half a mind to turn back. Mr. Tuck was tiresome when in health, and trying in illness, but an invalid Mr. Tuck, alone, on your hands every day and all day for five weeks, was—well, we'll say, cloying. And, indeed, poor Mrs. Cassidy at times felt inclined to do what Dr. Johnson would have been inclined to do if he had found himself in the position suggested for him by the sage Boswell: "What would you do, sir, if you were locked up in a tower with a baby?" But Mr. Tuck had three thousand pounds a year, and she could fill The Keep with company, and so take him as he took his arrowroot which she made sapid for him with sugar, spices, and wine.

Mr. Tuck, being in love chiefly with the reflection of himself, and Mrs. Cassidy with The Keep, their wooing wanted warmth and rather hung fire. Mr. Tuck yearned for advice; but who was to advise him? Left without this medicine of the mind, of which he took as many doses for peptic purposes as he administered of the other kind to his body, with as wholesome a result—left, we say, without this mental medicine, he was at a stand. While he lay awake at night he planned the proposal and the proper approaches to it again and again, and arranged every word, look, and gesture thereto appertaining in due and decorous sequence; yet, when the hour and the woman came, he was dumb.

But weak men at times do the strongest things, and do them out of weakness, i.e. lack of self-control. They seem to drive furiously, while in reality the horses have bolted. Thus it happened that while Mr. Tuck one day was reclining on the sofa with Mrs. Cassidy seated at the other end, nursing his foot, like a baby, on her lap, handling it like Izaak Walton's frog, sponging it as it lay upon some oiled silk spread beneath it upon her knees, and purring over it soothingly whenever

Mr. Tuck drew in his breath with a sucking sound, as through a thrill of anguish.

It thus happened that on this eventful day Mr. Tuck, as he followed through his spectacles the deft movement of the fair hand which with soft touches was drying his foot, shot out suddenly:

"I'm not married!"

Mrs. Cassidy, with great presence of mind, started up, horribly upsetting Mr. Tuck and his foot.

"Not married!" and then in a voice that faltered a little, though, sooth to say, the speech was prepared for this foreseen crisis: "Mr. Tuck, how have I deserved this from you? I quitted my home and my friends and risked my good name for you—for your sake—for the sake of our old friendship," here there were tears in her voice, "and you have repaid me by—by——" Here she buried her face in her hands, too much overcome to proceed. When she thought the aposiopesis had taken effect, she raised her head, and fixing upon him melting eyes, in which the tears of sorrow had quite quenched the fire of anger, she murmured with the pathos of a breaking heart: "You, of all men!"

There's no doubt at all but that this speech would have had the full effect aimed at if Mr. Tuck's feelings had been disengaged; but, with his ankle, as it seemed to him, wrung and wrenched off like a chicken's neck, he was as insensible to all else for the moment as a mother with her dying child on her lap. Hence he only groaned pitifully, not remorsefully.

It was disconcerting. Still, it was unreasonable to expect the cooings of love from a wretch who seemed to himself to be undergoing the torture of the boot. Therefore Mrs. Cassidy, when her assault failed, resumed the siege without impatience and without discouragement. She fetched some liniment meant to dull the pain, and, kneeling at Mr. Tuck's feet, soothed the throbbing ankle therewith, doing her ministering gently, indeed, but coldly and in absolute silence.

Mr. Tuck was silent also. On recovering a little he would have complained, but for his fear of transmitting another shock through Mrs. Cassidy to his ankle.

She, rising at last majestic, said in a freezing tone:

"Good-bye, Mr. Tuck! I am sorry I was shocked into putting you to pain. At least, you will keep my secret—keep

secret my attendance on you? I didn't think—I couldn't think——"

"I didn't tell you before," broke in Mr. Tuck, rather querulously than apologetically, for his ankle throbbed still, "I didn't tell you before because I didn't want you to leave me. I don't want you to leave me. I want you never to leave me."

"Mr. Tuck!"

"Besides, you wouldn't let me tell you," he continued, dropping to this bathos through his habit of always following out his own train of thought without the least regard to the words or feelings of any companion. Here ensued an awkward pause. Mrs. Cassidy couldn't well keep up her attitude of amazement and confusion for two minutes together, nor could she decorously recall Mr. Tuck to his subject with the reminder:

"By the way, you were proposing for me, I think?"

On the other hand, Mr. Tuck, having missed his footing and dropped down to this depth, didn't know how to climb back.

"I wouldn't let you tell me!" at last exclaimed the widow; "I had no wish to force your confidence, Mr. Tuck, and I had no need. Your letter to Mr. Upcher told me."

"Upcher's nonsense!" cried Mr. Tuck, with an unusual impetuosity, for he was reminded of his battered Galatea. "The letter was about that statuette," pointing to the figure, a piteous spectacle, for it had suffered more than its master from their common mishap. It was an unfortunate diversion of Mr. Tuck's mind to this great trouble which looked always double to his eyes—a loss not of twenty guineas only, or of the statuette only, but of twenty guineas and of the statuette. He couldn't help descanting once more for a moment upon the marred beauty of Galatea.

"Ah, Mr. Tuck," softly sighed the widow, "little wonder you never married."

"Why?" he asked eagerly, eager always to hear anything about himself.

"You have such taste. No one could be beautiful enough for you."

"You are all I want," he cried gallantly, seizing her hand—hung like a bait within reach—delighted at once by the compliment, by the opening it gave him, and by the ready advantage he took of it. "I—I propose for you," he added, thinking with some complacency that he was showing

himself no mean master of the language of love.

"I don't know what to say," murmured the widow, blushing, downcast, confused, and proceeding to give by broken words intermittent glimpses into her amazed mind. "So sudden—so lonely! no one to advise with. If my poor dear——" Here she pulled herself up. "My poor dear husband," being always on her lips, had nearly slipped out mechanically. She felt he was not the fittest adviser to invoke at this crisis.

Meanwhile Mr. Tuck was rather thinking upon his next move than listening in an agony of suspense for her verdict. Now, when a person so methodical as he is forced for the first time from the path of propriety, he often flounders into the wildest excesses. Therefore, the reader must not be surprised to hear that he drew the willing widow down on the sofa by his side, put his arm round her, kissed her on the cheek, and called her "Nan."

The widow was rather taken aback by this last endearment, for "Nan" was not her own name, but that of her dog. The fact was, Mr. Tuck, when meditating his proposal, felt that the widow's christian-name was an indispensable part of his equipment for the enterprise. But what was it? Fortunately he found what he took for a necklace among her belongings on a table in his room, and on it was engraved the name "Nan." It was a pretty electro-plated collar for her dog, which she had ordered some time before in Ryecote, and was taking back with her on the day of the accident. Mrs. Cassidy was at a loss to think how he came by this name for her until he presented her some time later with a fac-simile of the collar, name and all, in real silver, which he tried to clasp about her neck. For Mr. Tuck having, after his manner, looked in vain for the hall-mark on the original collar the moment he took it into his hands, thought it safest, in his ignorance of ladies' taste in ornaments in general, and of Mrs. Cassidy's taste in particular, to borrow this suggestion as to the form of his present, and trust his own judgment only as to its substance.

This mistake of Mr. Tuck's is worth mentioning only in illustration of Mrs. Cassidy's tact. She resisted, indeed, with much modesty, Mr. Tuck's attempt to clasp his wedding present about her neck; but she never by a word, or even by a smile, led him to suspect the mistake he had made until after their marriage. She

even took the name Ann in addition to her own—Bridget—for her wedding, had it inserted in the licence, and was married thereby, and gave it back to her dog only when the honeymoon was over.

We seem to be rather hurrying matters, but matters were rather hurried. Mr. Tuck, having got over his proposal, proceeded with unintentional frankness to give his chief reasons for it. Having dwelt long and lovingly to the widow about the rest of his drawing-room furniture and its cost, he passed by a natural digression to the exorbitance of his household expenses, the extravagance of his housekeeper, and his pleasure in the prospect of her dismissal. And then, without in the least intending it, he gave Mrs. Cassidy to understand that he regarded her as a good investment—rather in the light of a patent stove, warranted to save its first cost in a month. The widow, who was not the woman to lure a hare with a horn, accepted the proposed situation with a good grace. She showed her fitness for it by whetting Mr. Tuck's indignation at this extravagance and his resolution to put a stop to it at once.

Thus it came about that Mr. Tuck became anxious for an immediate union, wrote at once for the licence, and was married within ten days from his proposal.

Mrs. Tuck had the marriage advertised in every possible paper, that it might be thoroughly talked to death before her return to Kingsford. It was. The news electrified the place. It was as a city bereaved after a battle. Each widowed woman in it had lost the one thing dearer than a husband—a prospective husband—not in fair fight, either, but by treachery, and by means too infamous to be expressed through other than dark hints and Burleigh-like shakings of the head.

Two absolutely incompatible theories of the affair were held—not as alternatives, but together. Mrs. Cassidy had been engaged to Mr. Tuck all along, and but mocked them with her conjectures about the bride to be; and besides, and over and above this, she had taken advantage of Mr. Tuck's accident—if, indeed, she had not herself caused it designedly—to keep him a close prisoner, and put him to the ancient punishment for contumacy—*peine forte et dure*—till he was tortured into a proposal.

But, we need hardly say, it was not Mr. Tuck's marriage, however compassed, which so moved the maiden city. No!

His marriage was not a matter of the least consequence or concern to anyone but himself and his wife; but those weeks before marriage which Mr. Tuck and Mrs. Cassidy spent together in an hotel in a strange town——!

It was this, and this alone, which shook each head and shocked each heart, and decided Kingsford to cut Mrs. Tuck. No one was to visit, or invite, or countenance her, henceforth for ever.

Nevertheless, such was the placability of these kindly Kingsford folk that, on Mrs. Tuck's establishment at The Keep as its mistress, and as the mistress of three thousand pounds a year, it was a race as to who should be the first to call upon her. It is true that only part of her punishment was remitted. She was still to be quartered—i.e. torn to pieces—but not while she was alive to it—i.e. not to her face.

FIVE ITALIAN DOGS.

IN the course of a recent autumn holiday, most agreeably spent at a friend's house in the neighbourhood of Florence, I made the acquaintance of several interesting persons, four-legged as well as two-legged, the most remarkable of whom unquestionably belonged to the former category. They were dogs—five Italian dogs. Although I spent little more than a fortnight in their company, I contrived within that brief period to overcome their inborn prejudices against a foreign biped, and even, by the exercise of considerable patience and tact, to acquire their friendship, more or less cordially displayed in exact proportion to the respective sternness or amenity of their dispositions. Being constitutionally addicted to the society of dogs—animals surprisingly quick at recognising those who wish them well, and rarely unrequited of sincere goodwill—and having for many a year past been honoured with the esteem and confidence of several eminent members of the canine community, I soon succeeded in convincing these Italian quadrupeds that, although not their compatriot by birth, I was the sort of person whom an honest and self-respecting dog might fearlessly tolerate and even, to a certain extent, rely upon. From relations of mere courtesy to those of genial intimacy, the transition—except in one case—was a rapid and complete one. I believe myself to be justified in asserting that four of those five dogs made up their minds, some days before I took an affec-

tionate leave of them, to regard me as a firm and faithful friend, to whom their material interests and recreations were matters worthy of serious consideration and steadfast attention.

Such varieties of temperament, contrasts of character, and diversity of habits I have never before encountered in five individualities, canine or human. Light and darkness are not more dissimilar than any one of these dogs is to any other. They are, I should perhaps mention, the property of Ernesto Rossi, the great Shakespearian tragedian and commentator, and reside in or about his beautiful villa at Montughi, on the hill of that name, about two miles from the Porta San Gallo. Their names are Flossy, Rio, Bozzolino, Perso, and Lupar. That is the order in which they rank amongst the members of the Rossi family. Nobody who knows anything about the characteristics of pet dogs and the qualities that especially endear them to their owners, will be surprised to learn that the most influential and beloved of these animals is also the smallest in size and the most ferocious in temper. Born to rule, intolerant of restraint, exclusively devoted to the protection and furthering of his own interests, Flossy deserves a paragraph to himself. A psychological analysis of this distinguished despot, carefully drawn up, would fill a chapter.

In commenting upon the character of the venerable Countess of Kew, Thackeray remarked that one of the most invaluable gifts that Nature can bestow upon anybody is "a fine furious temper." Of the correctness of that assertion my respected friend Flossy is a shining illustration and conclusive proof. From early puppyhood to advanced senility—he is at present twelve years old—he has bitten and snarled his way through life with a persevering and indomitable savageness that has secured to him the servile deference and implicit obedience of all who have been brought into contact with him. He may be not inaptly described as a choice assortment of first-class vices and evil passions neatly packed up in a small, fluffy, and highly decorative skin of creamy-white hue. A native of South America, in which country he had been just weaned when he was presented to Rossi's only daughter, Evelina, he is an exceptionally handsome sample of a cross between the Skye and Maltese breeds of long-haired terriers. At a time when his infant gums were still toothless, he made a spirited attempt, accompanied

by growls of unmistakable spitefulness, to bite his young mistress, and has ever since persevered in that attitude, not only towards herself, but towards mankind at large. He is an irreconcilable, an "intransigent" of the deepest dye—an anthropophagist by conviction, and an inveterate hater of his own kind to boot. Above all, he is the very incarnation of ingratitude. I have seen him repeatedly attempt to bite the kind hand engaged in supplying him with his favourite dainty—a cloying preparation of coffee residue and pounded loaf-sugar. One of his most alarming habits is to all-but choke himself by endeavouring to swallow and growl simultaneously; his anxiety to defy the person who has just bestowed upon him some tit-bit being so overpowering that he cannot wait to dispose of the morsel before giving vent to his angry feelings. I never dreamt that any creature—short of a freshly-caught Bengal tiger—could be so continuously irascible. As a French friend of the Rossis aptly said of him one evening: "*Il est rageur à ne pas y croire, ce petit grédin!*" To touch him, ever so lightly and caressingly, is to elicit an explosion of choler that would do honour to a gouty admiral, whose chalk-stones had been unexpectedly administered to with a paviour's rammer. I studied Flossy's character closely and with absorbing interest, and utterly failed to discover any redeeming quality in him. My friends told me that he treated me with marked and unusual partiality. If that was so, he certainly demonstrated his regard in an odd way; for I must do him the justice to say that he bit me "wherever found." To my apprehension, however, he treated everybody alike in this respect; I could detect no shade of preference in his manner of snapping at my hands whenever he got half a chance to lay hold of them. And yet Flossy is beloved by those about him; nay, more—he rules the Rossi household with practically undisputed sway. No crowned head is attended to more obsequiously than he. It is impossible to ignore him when he wants, or fancies he wants, anything; for, until he gets it, he accompanies conversation with an inexhaustible succession of crisp barks, produced at intervals of from ten to twelve seconds. Sometimes this performance elicits a mild remonstrance of "*Buono, Flossy!*" or a gentle rebuke of "*Nojoso, nojoso!*" from the lady of the house. Sometimes, when distraction is painted on the faces of all the guests

assembled round his table, Rossi performs an often-rehearsed little domestic comedy consisting in summoning a particular manservant (the mere enunciation of whose name convulses the little dog with spasms of ire), and commanding him to remove the offender. "*Emilio! piglia Flossy e portalo via!*" is the formula adhered to on such occasions. Its immediate result is a deafening outburst of indignant protest on the part of Flossy; upon which Rossi is wont to remark, with a benignant smile, "*Is it not amazing how intelligent that dog is? You see, he understands all that I say about him, come un vero Cristiano!*" It is probably the indomitable spirit and valour displayed by so small an animal that have secured impunity to his manifold offences. Some years ago, another dog (of whom I shall have something to say presently), exasperated beyond bounds by Flossy's reckless provocations, snapped at him viciously, and tore his left eye out of its socket. So painful an accident—it brought him to death's door—would have quelled the pugnacity of most dogs, at least for a while. It did not produce that effect upon Flossy. The lady who nursed him night and day through his danger has assured me that he growled at her, when apparently in extremis, and bit the surgeon several times. I can personally testify to the unabated insolence of his demeanour towards the very dog from whom he had received a correction that well-nigh proved fatal to him.

That dog is Rio, a black and white Newfoundland of extraordinary size and strength; frank, impulsive, and masterful, an embarrassing combination of genial good-nature and ungovernable jealousy. In his manners and utterances he is more ursine than canine. When Dame Nature laid down his lines, she had a bear in her mind; but, probably through some technical error, her handiwork turned out a dog. Rio does not live at Montughi, but at Rossi's Florentine palace, whence, every evening, he is brought "on the chain" to visit his master and mistress by a domestic specially affected to his service—a mild obsequious Tuscan, who ministers to Rio's necessities with mingled terror and pride. He is supposed to lead Rio; as a matter of fact, Rio leads him, or rather drags him along at a laborious trot, varied by involuntary bounds. As the hour draws nigh at which Rio's nightly visits take place, an uneasiness of deportment and tendency towards self-effacement make

themselves manifest in the other Montughi dogs—Flossy always excepted, who would not budge from his post of 'vantage on Signora Rossi's chair were a seven-headed fiery dragon to enter the dining-room. Bozzolino and Perso, however, mysteriously vanish, and Lupar retires to honourable obscurity in the stables. On arriving, Rio takes a preliminary canter through all the reception-rooms and servants' offices with a view to ascertaining whether or not any other dog be lurking about on the premises. Having completed this tour of inspection, during which he is distinctly audible to the naked ear, he gallops into the *salle-à-manger*, and pays his respects to his master and mistress. It is during this ceremony that his utterances, intended to express the loyalty and devotion with which his heart is teeming, exactly resemble those of an infuriate bear. When we first met, he favoured me with a few remarks, purporting—as I was subsequently informed—that he was glad to see me, and hoped we should get on together. I thought my last hour was come, and stiffened my sinews for a death-struggle. We subsequently became excellent friends. I propitiated him with fowl-bones and ultimately won his affection by gratifying his taste for chunks of bread-crust steeped in gravy. In acknowledgment of these attentions he would roll on his back at my feet for five minutes at a stretch, growling all the while like *Atta Troll*. That is Rio's way of apprising his particular friends that he is a grateful and contented dog. But when the jealous fit is upon him—not infrequently by any means—the latent truculence of his nature breaks out, and he becomes uncontrollable, save by one—a lady to whom dogs and men alike submit, rejoicing in their subjugation. I mean the Signora Padrona, my esteemed friend Evelina Rossi, who, with a word and glance, can always bring the fierce Newfoundland to his bearings, and change, as though by enchantment, the red glare of his angry eye into a fond and loving look.

Bozzolino is a comic dog, of no recognised breed. His appearance is that of a fat fox with a curly brush and short legs. Under a mask of buffoonery he conceals great strength of will and remarkable reasoning powers. Seemingly volatile and eccentric, he is really a shrewd and painstaking student of human character. Frivolity with him is a means to the end; for experience has taught him that dog-lovers regard it as covering a multitude of sins.

Bozzolino knows that a frivolous dog, being held irresponsible for his actions, can generally have his own way. He has, therefore, assiduously addressed himself to earning a reputation for light-hearted eccentricity, and with triumphant success. For instance, it is not his humour to sleep or breakfast at the villa, but at the house of one of Rossi's *contadini*, about half-way down the avenue of cedars and olive-trees that leads from *La Macine* to the high road. Though he is the signora's own personal dog—her body-dog, from a German point of view—she puts up with his residential "vagaries" on the ground that "Bozzolino is so frivolous." As, after I had known him for a day or two, Bozzolino's frivolity struck me as studied rather than spontaneous, and somewhat more obtrusively put forward than was consistent with the inborn carelessness of character attributed to him; as, moreover, upon several occasions (when he did not know I was watching him) I had detected an expression of consummate slyness in his lively hazel eye, I resolved to try whether close observation of his habits might not enable me to divine his motive for dividing his time between luxury at the villa—a very dog's paradise—and frugality at the cottage. That he was a surpassingly greedy dog I knew; his appetite and capacity of stowage, considered in relation to his size, had already astounded me; and it was his greediness that furnished the clue by following up which I succeeded eventually in plucking out the heart of Bozzolino's mystery. As I have already stated, he never passed the night at *La Macine*. After dinner every evening, when cards or music had set in, Bozzolino disappeared, and we saw no more of him until the following afternoon, when, it being the signora's daily custom to drive into Florence at about two p.m., he was found awaiting her by the cottage of his choice, whence he escorted her vociferously to the great iron gates of the domain, beyond which he declined to follow the carriage. When she returned, however, no matter at what hour, Bozzolino was "in waiting" at the *contadino's* door, with demonstrations of exaggerated rapture, to accompany her home. Presently the dinner-bell rang, and Bozzolino took up a strategic position to the left of the signora's chair. From that moment till the end of the repast his gaze was riveted upon her face, never relaxing its pitiful importunity for a second, even after it had been responded

to by food enough for two dogs of his calibre. His every lineament, so to speak, inferred privation of an altogether unbearable stringency; his attitude and expression were ineffably pathetic. A finer piece of acting in dumb show I never witnessed, nor did it ever fail to produce the desired effect. "How hungry poor Bozzolino looks," the signora would say, when this ingenious pantomime had lasted a few minutes; "I am sure those Martellis starve him;" and a third plateful of succulent scraps would be set before Bozzolino, to be cleared of its contents with incredible swiftness. This supplement, this gross superfluity of nourishment, was the sole aim and end of all his assumed frivolity and eccentricity of habits. Had he taken his morning meal at home, like the other dogs, his evening pretence of starvation must have been promptly detected, and disgrace could hardly have failed to follow exposure. His periodical visits to the Martellis, however, served his purpose perfectly, by exposing those worthy peasants to the imputation of keeping him on short commons, and thus justifying his mute claim to an extra helping. A dog who could mature and carry out to its most delicate detail so subtle and elaborate a plan as the above, is a loss to Italian diplomacy. His name should be Machiaville, not Bozzolino.

Perso's connection with the Rossi family originated, as his name indicates, in his being a lost dog. This waif is yellow, long, and wiry, suggesting a Yorkshire tyke which has made lifelong but ineffectual efforts to become a deerhound. His owners know him to be an unusually confused mongrel; but, in describing him to inquisitive foreigners, they keep up a kindly fiction to the effect that he represents a rare and curious variety of Apennine sheep-dog. I have observed that they only utter this myth in his presence; from which fact I infer that it was invented with a view to raising him in his own estimation, or at least to sparing him the humiliation of being referred to as a nondescript. Appearances are certainly against Perso; they could not well be more so; but the proverb says they are deceitful, and in his case the proverb is right. A gentler, humbler, more forgiving, affectionate creature never drew breath. He is a very worm for meekness and diffidence. His spirits must have been suddenly knocked down, probably in early life, by some tremendous domestic calamity, and he has never been able to pick them up. When other dogs

bite him he only howls, and creeps away sorrowfully to lick his wounds in private. His attitude towards society at large is a recumbent and inverted one; called or spoken to, even in the friendliest tone, he falls down prostrate, turns limply over upon his back, and folds up his four paws, expectant of the worst, but deprecating excessive violence. "Kick me," he seems to say; "you have a right to do so. Heaven forefend that I should question that right, or resent its exercise. But, if one so abject may venture to offer a suggestion, do not utterly pulverise me. Leave me life enough to permit of my licking your hand, and humbly thanking you for a well-merited correction." He is afraid of everything; I might say of nothing, for I have seen him start and shiver at his own shadow; but, above all else, of Rio, who one day, in a paroxysm of jealousy, took a mouthful out of his head. When Perso hears his enemy's bark, far away down the avenue, he begins to tremble in every limb, as though smitten with palsy; he disposes of his tail and ears in such sort that they all but vanish from sight, and glides away in a spectral manner to the nearest hiding-place. If discovered by the Newfoundland, who sometimes takes especial pains to hunt him up, he grovels before that overbearing tyrant, gasping with affright, and whimpering for mercy. As a rule Rio, contented with having demonstrated his mastery over the only other large dog in the establishment, sniffs at him contemptuously, utters a monitory growl or two, and turns away with his nose in the air, as from something too despicably low to merit further attention. After an interview of this class, hours elapse before Perso's nerves recover from the shock they have sustained. He retires to a corner, coils himself up tight, and shakes. Perso, however, must have his moments of expansiveness, and cannot be insensible to the passion of love; for, having noticed upon different occasions, whilst driving about the neighbourhood of Montughi, several melancholy mongrels bearing more or less resemblance to my abashed friend at La Macine, I ventured to enquire whether these, too, were Apennine dogs of any peculiar breed, and received the answer: "Sono figli di Perso." I could not have credited him with the courage to woo; but, with respect to the number of his offspring, it appears that he is quite a patriarch. Possibly he finds consolation in family joys for the wrongs of his

blighted youth and for the general deconsideration brought upon him by his pusillanimity. No dog to whose name the adjective "poor" is invariably prefixed when he is addressed, or even casually mentioned, can enjoy the proud moral voluptuousness of self-respect in connection with his social relations; but it may be that he is looked up to by his own wives and children, and I have reason to believe that Perso assumes an air of mild authority in his domestic circles. Unseen myself, I have more than once seen him playfully rebuke one of his consorts—Lupar, the last of the five Italian dogs inadequately dealt with in this hasty sketch—by biting her ears. He is, moreover, somewhat peremptory with his fleas. This trait, and his conspicuous expertness as a fly-catcher, incline me to the opinion that Perso has some latent energy about him, and will some day astonish his friends by taking his own part, perhaps, even, by growling!

Of Lupar, Perso's Khanom or chief wife, I wish to speak with such moderation as may be compatible with my painful remembrance of the harassing personal inconvenience and annoyance inflicted upon me by that execrable animal during my sojourn at La Macine. She is, perhaps, not so much a dog as a highly ingenious and efficient self-winding-up engine for the production of barks. Not admitted to the interior of the villa—I could never lure her even to cross its threshold—she is supposed to reside in a kennel specially affected to her use upon a broad stone terrace fronting the house. It is her official function, however, to keep watch over Rossi's property; consequently, she persistently abstains from availing herself of the accommodation provided for her, and lopes up and down the aforesaid terrace from dewy eve to sparkling morn, discharging several hundred thousand powerful barks during the hours usually devoted to slumber. As far as she and the miscreants she is supposed to frighten away are concerned, nothing ever comes of this dreadful practice. Rossi's vines are plundered with impressive regularity by nocturnal amateurs of the grape, who carry off their booty unmolested, and, I dare say, smiling. But the effect of Lupar on temporary residents at La Macine is disastrous, maddening, and—by reason of the language it provokes—eminently prejudicial to their salvation. A good many dogs inhabit the Arno valley, and pass their nights *al fresco*. Lupar renders

them incessantly and hideously vocal for many a mile. They would be as silent as oysters but for her. Whenever bronchial fatigue compels her to pause for a few seconds their yelping at once dies out, and peace reigns over Tuscany. As soon as she has recovered breath, however, she starts them off again with a fresh solo, and they take up their choral parts as vivaciously as though murdering sleep were an honourable and lucrative profession. Then Tuscany, or at least the stranger within its gates, becomes wakeful again, and impairs its psychical prospects by a desperate endeavour to exhaust the Italian vocabulary of expletives. Lupar is the head and front of all this offending, and her moral responsibilities must, by this time, be something tremendous, for, as I am credibly informed, she has shattered the rest of an entire commune every night, and all night long, throughout the past two years. If maledictions could have consumed her during my experiences of her iterative capacities, there would not have been an ash of her left on the second morning after my arrival at Montughi. Fortunately for her, "words are but breath, and breath a vapour is." I parted from her without sorrow, however, and fondly hope I may never hear her bark again. She is the only one of the five Italian dogs I met at Ernesto Rossi's country house whose idiosyncrasies caused me unmitigated distress, and still rankle in my memory.

BY THE FIRE.

SHE sat and mused by the drift-wood fire,
As the leaping flames flashed high and higher,
And the phantoms of youth, as fair and bright,
Grew for her gaze in the ruddy light;
The blossoms she gathered in life's young days,
Wreathed and waved in the flickering blaze;
And she laughed through a sunny mist of tears,
That rose at the dream of her April years;
And ever and aye the sudden rain,
Plashed on the glittering window-pane.

Sobered and saddened the pictures that showed
As the drift-wood logs to a red core glowed,
And the fancied figures of older time
Passed with the steadied step of their prime;
The daisies and snowdrops bloomed and died,
Red roses and lilies stood side by side,
While richer, and fuller, and deeper grew,
The lines of the pictures August drew;
And ever and aye the falling rain,
Streamed thick and fast on the window-pane.

The drift-wood died down into feathery ash,
Where faintly and fitfully shone the flash;
Slowly and sadly her pulses beat,
And soft was the fall, as of vanishing feet;
And lush and green as from guarded grave,
She saw the grass of the valley wave;
And like echoes in ruins seemed to sigh,
The "wet west wind" that went wandering by,
And caught the sweep of the sullen rain,
And dashed it against the window-pane.

EOS.

A STORY IN THREE CHAPTERS. CHAPTER I.

A SIGH came up through the forest. A sobbing breath of the dying summer. It stirred the leaves, scarlet, and russet, and orange, of the trees that had already begun to don their autumn dress, and scattered the petals of a crimson-flowered creeper at the feet of a man and woman standing near.

The man stooped—mechanically it seemed, for his face betrayed neither interest nor admiration—and gathered up two or three in his hand. There was a cluster of the same flower at the girl's throat. He had himself picked it, and given it to her a short time before. Then he spoke in answer to her last speech.

"I am glad you say that I was not to blame. I am afraid that I was. I shall never be able to do away with that fear. Still, it is just some small alleviation to the pain, that you believe that I would not willingly have brought you to this." He spoke in a still gentle voice—a voice that made the strangest contrast to his white lips and haggard eyes.

The girl, scarcely out of her childhood, flushed hotly, then shivered from head to foot.

"No—no!" she exclaimed in sudden passion. "You had nothing to do with it. It was all my own fault. You would never have asked me to marry you that day if I had not——"

She stopped, and hiding her face in her hands, broke out into pitiful shamed sobs.

The young man made no attempt for a moment to approach her. He stood looking at her, his handsome face growing whiter, his lips more strained and drawn, as if he were bearing the burden of two agonies—his own and hers—and that it was almost more than mortal strength could endure.

But he prevailed. There was a curious kind of repressed strength, physical and moral, in everything he said or did, that showed itself in every line of his face, in every muscle of his magnificent figure, that told the conquest would be his.

He took a step over to the sobbing girl, upon whose slender finger gleamed a plain gold ring. She did not look up, but bent a little towards him, as if claiming his strength to support her. He passed his arm round her, and with a quick, long-drawn breath, she let her head rest on his breast.

"It was so wicked of me to talk like that," she exclaimed, raising her face after a second or two in quick remorseful pain, to his. "You, who are so good to me; you, who never think from morning to night of any one but me; you, who are my husband, just as you are my love! Oh, Michael, I grumble and say hard things and make your life miserable—yes, I do! Every time I am lonely and unhappy you look as if I had nearly broken your heart, and yet you are always so gentle and patient. But, Michael, I do love you. It is just that. If mother and all of them should forgive me, and want me back, I would not go without you. I could not live again as I did, now that you have once been in my life. You believe that, don't you?" She clung to him with a childlike, passionate abandon, and raising her arms drew his tall head down to hers.

He kissed her quivering lips, and drew her closer to him.

For a second there was silence; only the ceaseless chirp of the grasshoppers, so constant, so monotonous, so shrill, that it seemed as if it were the only sound in all the forest, broke upon the evening stillness.

It rose above, and crushed into insignificance, every other sound of life, until it appeared to Michael Laurie as if they two and the grasshoppers were the only living things breathing and moving in all that vast dimness of wooded avenues.

Two solitary human beings acting out there some terrible drama, with the eternal chirping of those shrill grasshoppers for the chorus.

It hurt him at last. It seemed to hurt him more than the sobs of the girl on his breast as they gradually became fainter and died into long-drawn breaths.

The shrill sound seemed to enter his brain and prevent his thinking, and mingle with the beats of his heart, until he scarcely knew if it were beating at all, or whether it had not stopped ever since that moment a short time before, when his wife had upbraided him with bitter, passionate reproaches for bringing her out of her happy girl's life into such a place as this.

The wife was still resting in his arms, her tears were still wet on his hand which she had raised to her lips in her remorseful pain—but those grasshoppers!

The pitiless, hard monotony of their chorus seemed to give the lie to it all—to the clinging embrace, the bitterness and self-reproach of the tears. It was neither mocking, nor merry, nor doubting.

It only repeated over and over again, till it sounded like the beat of an eternal endulum, the motions of which had never had a beginning, and might never have an end, the whisper of his own heart :

"Love doubts, love dies."

He had not yet dared put the whisper into words.

But the thought before which his man's strength and courage quailed, those grasshoppers caught up and echoed in heartless, nameless cruelty, till all the wood rang with the expression of his heart's pain. Suddenly there was a movement from the figure in his arms. The terror and the stillness of the forest fell upon her again, even though he rested so close to him that she could have counted every beat of his heart.

She raised her head and looked round, her eyes dilating with the fear and the awe of the place ; she caught his hand in hers convulsively.

"It is lonely, Michael ! It is lonely, is not it ?" she cried with a shuddering breath.

He too glanced round. The dusk of the summer night had stolen up every opening between the silent trees, and was already close upon them, shutting them in as with a ghostly shroud from the life and the love of the human beings who dwelt together in the towns and cities beyond the woods and forests. He had thought love was divine, and, therefore, all-sufficient to itself. He had been mistaken.

"Yes, dear," he said gently. "It is very lonely—though I never found it so before. Come home now."

CHAPTER II.

THAT night, when his wife lay sleeping, Michael Laurie paced up and down the living-room of the tiny house he had built himself for his love.

There was not a nail but had been driven by his own hand, not a plank but had been cut from the tree he had himself felled. If the thoughts, and the heart-beats, and the great desires, and the passionate longings which had entered into every action of his strong right arm, from the first stroke of the axe to the last blow of the hammer, could have taken visible shape, that tiny cottage, in the midst of the vast woods, would have become a temple such as no mortal eye had ever yet beheld. Yet, though he had spent the best of his strength and his cunning upon it, it had appeared so miserable and rude a basket for the treasure it was to hold, that his heart had failed him till she,

seeing it for the first time, had stood still in a silence of wonder and delight, and then had turned to him with eyes in which the misty tears could not hide the love-light, and with lips that trembled as they tried to smile, had said :

"Ah, Michael, what a beautiful home you have made me !"

Yes, it was the same woman who had reproached him a few hours ago.

Michael drew a deep breath through his clenched teeth, then, as if he would shut out the sight of everything that recalled that day and this, he flung himself into a chair, and laying his arms on the table, buried his face in them.

But he might as well have tried to crush out the love of his heart.

As he sat there, the whole history of that love rose up before him, each separate act and incident taking the shape of a phantom shadow, mocking at his present pain.

The burning hotel with its horrible sights and sounds. The rescue of that child-girl already scorched and wounded by the fierce flames, and the giving her back to her father and mother, who in their wild delight and gratitude would have knelt at his feet and blessed him.

Him — a working-man, while they belonged to the great ones of the earth !

Then for the first time in all his life Michael Laurie felt the presence of the great gulf fixed between the high-born and earth's workers.

Was it the first time ? Or was it not rather a foreshadowing of its depth and breadth which had fallen upon him, as he fought his way through the smoke and the flames, the slight figure pressed closely to his breast, when, as he bent over her to see that she was not hurt to the death, she had opened her eyes, and met his with a gaze that would haunt his life to that life's end ?

As he sat there the shadows crowded upon him so thick and fast that they bewildered him.

How all that happened afterwards should have happened, he could not understand. How her life should have become the echo of the great love that stirred his to its depths, he could not comprehend.

His own greatness and strength, which placed him far above the average of men, made him humble as a child in the presence of his love.

Yet the miracle was worked, and a day

came, when she, all involuntarily, betrayed the secret that troubled her.

With a sound like a smothered groan Michael Laurie turned his head restlessly. Even then, it would not have been too late to leave her. Honour, pride, love, all told him that he, a working-man, had nothing to do with her life, belonging as it did to the great and the rich. What did it matter that he, by right of mental and moral superiority, had been selected a leader in his own class, that he gloried in that same class as the one bearing the heat and the burden of the day in life's great battle? He still knew perfectly that fortune, which has so great a share in ruling men's lives whether they will or no, had set her as far apart from him as if they had been living in separate worlds. But he stayed. In despite of the parents' opposition they were married, and she left her own home to follow him to the one he had prepared for her. He had been only passing through the town when he had saved her life, and he took her back to the distant woods in which his work lay.

For the first year the only shadow upon the perfect happiness of their married life was the bitterness and grief of the father and mother, who, their wounded pride stronger than their gratitude, refused all attempts at reconciliation.

The cloud was dark enough, Michael Laurie knowing that they had reason—at least, the reason that acts as the foundation of the laws by which society governs itself—on their side, while Daisy, who had been their only child, and the very delight of their hearts, grieved intensely for the loss of their affection. But the shadow only affected the love between them, in that it drew them closer together, she depending upon and clinging more to the love that must now make her whole world; he, enfolding her in a great protecting tenderness, exerting himself, body and soul, to save her from the very faintest need of repentance for her rash act.

Just one year of great, perfect happiness, without a single doubt to cast a shadow.

Then, how it began he could not tell.

The shadow was so faint, so intangible, that settled down upon the love of the household, that, until it culminated in that scene that afternoon, he could not have put its presence into words. He had striven hard to make himself her equal—harder, great as his ambition had been, than he had ever done in the old days before he knew her. But, after all, he was

a son of the people, self-taught, self-cultivated. Little tricks of speech, of which he himself was not conscious, till he saw the sudden involuntary shrinking in her face; common hardships and roughnesses, which, with all his care, he could not quite banish from their workaday life, and which he, accustomed to them all his life, scarcely noticed; the contact, even in this far-out-of-the-way spot, with things and people which at one time she had beheld as from another world, but which now, as belonging to the class and lot of her husband, were necessarily brought so closely into her own life.

Then the long days, without even that husband's presence to cheer and help her.

Long, weary days, when he was at his work, and she had nothing to do but sit and long for his coming, while the awe and the silent mystery of those vast woods, in which she might wander for days and never see a fellow-creature's face, nor hear a human voice, began to weave its spell over her and overshadow her life, coming, as she had done, straight from the pleasures, and amusements, and society that cities provide for the rich ones of the earth.

The thin end of the wedge had been inserted, and the rift grew wider and wider as the days went on, and neither the efforts of husband and wife could close it again; and the worst part was that each knew that the other saw and felt its dread presence, try as they both would to ignore it. But even that veil of ignorance had been rent at last. Could it ever be closed again so perfectly as to hide completely the mistrust, and the bitterness, and the disappointment? And as the grey morning light stole into the room, gradually bringing into view all the numberless devices wrought by his hand for the love of his life—the carved book-case, the quaint brackets, the very flowers, brought only yesterday from the scene of his distant work—Michael Laurie knew that it would never be.

He rose at last, staggering a little as he did so. He stood still for a second, facing the window, through which fell now the daylight, no longer wan, and pale, and grey, but a glorious stream of crimson sunny light, while suddenly, instead of the shrill, joyless cry of the grasshoppers, there had burst from every tree and shrub the glad, merry voices of the birds.

In the place of the chill and the silence

of death, were the stir and the glory of glad, passionate life.

"Yes," he said to himself, with a faint smile, though there was no echo of the earth's new gladness and hope in his eyes, "Aurora returned every morning as beautiful as when she left the earth, but she forgot that Tithonus was not of the gods like herself, and all her love was not powerful enough to make him god-like too. Yet I, like him, must live on in her life for ever."

He put up his hand as if the dazzling light hurt his eyes, then turned, and went softly into their sleeping-room.

Daisy was not awake.

She had been crying bitterly before falling asleep. He could see that by the swollen eyelids and fever-flushed cheek. One little hand, with its golden circlet, was resting on the round throat, and, as he bent over her, he saw that it was clasping the locket she always wore, day and night.

One day, some time after he had first met her, he had left at her house a basket full of a beautiful crimson flower, for which she had expressed her admiration. She was going to a ball, and wished to wear some of the flowers in her dress. He had gone miles to get them for her, for they only grew in certain places.

One day, after they were married, she opened the locket shyly and showed him inside some faded flower-petals. She had saved them from the crimson creeper. Last night, she had cried herself to sleep, holding the locket tightly in her hand.

The sight went to Michael's heart with a stab of intolerable pain. She loved him through it all.

With a look of infinite pity and tenderness, he bent down and touched her forehead with his pale lips.

"Gods should not mate with mortals," he said; "for even their love is not strong enough to conquer destiny."

Then, without waking her, he went out to his day's work, for, after all, he had her bread to win.

CHAPTER III.

WHEN Michael Laurie returned that afternoon he found his home deserted.

His wife had left him.

When he started in the morning he had not meant to be long away. He had hurried on the work, working harder than the men he was superintending, waiting neither for food nor rest; but in spite of his efforts the afternoon sun was already

casting long shadows when he approached their home again.

This afternoon, there was no wife waiting to greet him as the house came into view.

The door, too, with its framework of tangled, fragrant creepers, was closed.

As his eyes fell upon it, Michael stopped, an exclamation breaking from him.

Across the threshold lay the great English mastiff he had given her for her companion and guardian. It never left her, either in her walks or in the house, seeming to understand to the full the great trust its master reposed in it.

It looked at Michael now, with a curious wistful expression in its eyes, and then, without attempting to come and meet him, flung back its head and gave a pitiful howl.

"Daisy!" called Michael, a terrible fear sending the blood rushing back to his heart as he ran towards the house, "Daisy!"

There was no answer. The house with its closed door was silent, and the only movement that broke its oppressive stillness, was the flutter of the muslin curtains as the breeze swayed them to and fro in the open window.

He opened the door and crossed the threshold, the dog following him. The first wild paroxysm of fear passed, a curious stillness seemed to have taken possession of Michael.

It was the passive acceptance of the inevitable. As he entered the house, it was as if all the vague presentiments of evil, the dull fear and dread that had lurked in his heart before, had taken visible shape, and the sight of its terror, Medusa-like, had turned him to stone.

He went from room to room, though he knew all the time that she would not be there. He did not enter the sleeping-room in which he had last looked upon her face only that morning. He stood on the threshold and looked slowly round it, then he drew back and closed the door very softly, very reverently, with an expression on his face as if he were closing the door upon the dead, only the dead which left behind no hope, no waiting love, no trusting patience. Even the dog seemed to feel some of the chill despair, and crept closer to his side. By-and-by he found a short note from his wife's father, saying that he had come to fetch his daughter, and had taken her away with him.

How the next few days passed, Michael could never tell. He went to his work as

usual, and mixed with the other men, and talked even, and ate to keep himself alive. To his fellow-workmen he seemed to be living his ordinary life, except that he did not return to the house in the woods. Once, in answer to a question of one of the men, he said his wife was dead, and there was something in his voice and eyes that made the man ask no further question.

He did return to the house once again.

It was at night.

He opened the door and went in. Then he brought out all the things he had fashioned and made himself, or that he had bought for her own particular use and fancy, and piling them up outside, set fire to them.

He stood there till everything was burned, and there only remained such charred wood and ashes that the earth and the air could soon destroy, and hide from the eyes of men.

"I could not bear to think of anyone using them after her," he said to himself as he turned away, "and she will never want them again."

Then he unclosed all the doors and windows of the house, leaving it open to the sun, and the winds, and the rain, that they might work their will as they listed.

So he went away, leaving it desolate and deserted in the pale grey of the dawn.

And thus it happened that when a messenger came from his wife's father, he found no one to receive the letters he carried, nor could he hear any news of Michael Laurie, for the latter had thrown up the work upon which he had been engaged, and had gone, no one knew whither.

It was a clear frosty afternoon, the last day of the old year. The pavements of the town were thronged by passers-by as they hurried from shop to shop, making their purchases of the dainty gifts to be distributed on the morrow, while the roads were hardly passable with the carriages and vehicles of every description that flowed through them in a great roaring wave of traffic.

All the town seemed to be out in the streets, which were full of the murmur of voices, of busy eager faces, of the rush and the stir of life, as it pulses and throbs through all the arteries of a great city of gay shops, and sights of wealth, and luxury, and refinement.

Though it was growing late in the afternoon, and the gas-lamps were already burning, the streets were still full, and a man making his way through them, unaccustomed to the sights and sounds of a great town, felt bewildered and weary at the endless stops and jostlings, and as he came out into a clear space, he drew a breath of relief, wondering with a vague kind of curiosity how people ever grew used to the close air, the noise, the unrest, the reckless pursuit of pleasure, or profit, or advancement, that appear to make up the sum of city life. The dusky shadows had filled the whole of one of the broadest and finest streets of the town when he turned into it. He had come with a purpose, judging from the steady, unerring course he had pursued to reach this street, but as he turned into it something within him seemed to fail him. He hesitated, and then began to walk with laggard feet down its length.

Suddenly a carriage, containing a gentleman and a lady closely wrapped in furs, rolled swiftly towards him. He had only just time to step into the shadow of one of the doorways when it pulled up at the house next to him.

At the same moment the door opened and a flood of light fell from the hall upon the pavement, while a man and a maid-servant came quickly down the steps. The gentleman was already helping the lady to alight, and while the old butler gathered up her wraps, the maid assisted her mistress. The slight delicate woman in her rich dress of furs seemed the centre round which the whole care and tenderness of the house clustered.

A centre of interest doomed to be the very frailest upon which human hopes were ever set, judging from the face upon which the lamplight fell as she mounted the steps. Thin, white, fragile, with a listless, hopeless look in the great dark eyes, and despairing sorrow in the curve of the mouth.

As Michael Laurie, with a start of shocked horror, bent forward to gaze into the face of the woman he had come from so far to look upon once again, the other man saw him. He too started, but he did not say a word. He assisted his daughter into the house, and then, coming out again, pulled the door to after him. He had only been absent a few seconds, the carriage had not yet turned the end of the street, when he stood by the side of Michael Laurie.

The latter had not moved from the spot from which he had seen his wife.

The elder man laid his hand on his arm.

"Yes, my daughter is dying," he said in still, hard tones, "and it is you who have killed her. Why did you go away without a word?"

"Dying!" Michael repeated the word mechanically. Then some of the sense of the other's speech seemed to dawn upon him. "But she left me. She grew tired. Yet I thought I could have made her happy."

The father paid no attention to his words. All the pride and the arrogance of his nature had vanished in the pain of seeing his child fading slowly before his eyes.

"She did not leave you. If you had not distrusted her so quickly you would have had an explanation. I found her, that day, ill—dying, I was afraid then. You do not know," he glanced up at an upper window from which a light shone, "you have not heard, and we could not let you know. I took her away that day. She was too ill to write, and I left that note. I confess I was still angry with you. I confess that there I did the wrong that has been punished so bitterly since. I did not explain that I had only persuaded her to come on the condition that you were to come too. Afterwards it was too late. You had gone."

"Why should I have stayed? I thought it was of her own free will."

"It was not. And since her child"—Michael started; up till this moment he could only think of one thing: that Daisy was dying—"was born she has been gradually fading away. It seemed as if, when there was no longer any hope of finding you, she lost all desire to live. You alone can call her back, if only it be not too late."

Michael Laurie put him on one side and moved towards the house.

"No, not at once," said the other, detaining him. "The shock might kill her. I must prepare her for seeing you."

How long Michael Laurie paced up and down outside the house he did not know. It seemed an eternity, in which he lived over again all the bitterness, and the despair, and the blankness that had fallen upon his life when he thought Daisy had left him for ever.

He was called at last. It was his wife's mother who brought him to the room where his wife awaited him.

But he had no word for her as he

followed her. It would have been as impossible to speak to any one of the interview that was to take place, as in that supreme moment to notice the rich carpets and silken hangings, the hundred signs of luxury and wealth that had been given up once for love's sake. In spite of the chorus of grasshoppers, love seemed once more all-powerful, all-sufficient.

Outside the door he was left alone.

He opened it and went in.

Daisy had had her baby brought to her, and as he entered she rose from her chair, the child pressed close to her breast, and tried to come to meet him. But even if the trembling that had seized her had allowed her to move, there would have been no need. The next second he was at her side, and kneeling down had stretched his arms round her, resting his head against the arms that held his child and hers.

He could not have spoken that first moment in which he stood in the presence of the woman who had changed so terribly since he last saw her. She had nothing to say either, but her eyes filled slowly with tears that seemed to well up from her very heart's depths, and fell softly on the sleeping child.

Michael was the first to move. The trembling of the slender figure in his arms reminded him how little she could bear of either joy or sorrow.

He rose to his feet, and drew her and the child close to him, supporting them both with his own strong arms.

"You have quite forgiven me, Michael?" she asked. "If only you knew how——"

"Don't speak of it any more. I understand now, but I did not know then, and I thought you would not wish to see me again, and the knowledge that I could do nothing to separate your life from mine, to leave you free as I found you, was almost more than I could bear. Now——"

"Now you will never leave me any more, Michael, life seems almost too good! Even my father and mother have forgiven me. Do you know what they wish? That you and I should live with them here, that you should give up your work and all the hardness and trouble of your old life, so that I may share with you the good things that belonged to mine. Oh, Michael!"

Resting closely against his heart, she had felt the sudden faint tremor that had passed through him. It terrified her again.

"You will not refuse? Mother and father will not let me go away again. It will break their hearts if you take me.

And I should go if you wished it. I cannot give you up. But it is so hard to displease them. They have been so good to me and to"—her pale face flushed as she looked down at the child—"our child. You will not refuse them this? It will only be accepting all the things you deserve. And we shall be able to go to Europe and see the places and the pictures you talk so much of, and you will have time to read and study as you have always wished, and you can do great things for the poor and the hard-working. It can't be so very hard to say 'yes' to all this."

There was a second's pause.

In that one second there rose up before Michael Laurie all that that "yes" meant. It meant renouncing the honest independence his pride and his manliness delighted in; the daily toil that he honoured as a gift from God's hand itself; the power and the influence that personal contact won over the lives of the men belonging to the class he loved better than all others, as being his own. It meant all this and still more. It meant to him the sacrifice of his whole present life, with its aims and its influences—and in return, what would he have?

The cramped, fettered existence of society; the stifling atmosphere of luxury, the bondage and the galling of dependence. He would not even be his own master.

"Michael! If not for our sake, for our child's."

He had turned his face away as the fierce struggle went on in his heart. He had forgotten his love in the question of his life. Her voice called him back to its presence.

He looked down, and at the sight of her face with its terrible delicacy, at the slender figure, that but for his support would have sunk like a broken reed to the ground, the storm was hushed. What had they said? He alone could bring her back from the gates of death. Whether for good or for evil her life had been linked to his; and nothing could separate them now; her fate was in his keeping. A sudden cold dread seized him that even this yielding up might be too late to save her.

"I will stay," he said, and he bent and kissed her lips with a grave solemnity that made the kiss like the seal of a consummated sacrifice.

"You are so good to me!" she whispered softly with grateful humility. "Can my love repay you?"

But even she could not quite enter into the breadth and the depth of his renunciation, and he knew that she could not.

Perfect happiness brought back to Daisy the health of which those who loved her had despaired. As soon as she could travel, she and Michael went to Europe, spending a new honeymoon in its towns rich with the treasures of ages, wandering through lands, every step of which had its own history or quaint old-world legend.

When they returned they went to live with Daisy's people. Their wealth and position naturally placed them in the foremost ranks of society. Little by little, though her love never failed from being the mainspring of her existence, Daisy took up her life as she had led it before she married.

Society makes claims in proportion to the returns it expects, and as Daisy Laurie belonged to the rich and powerful, its demands were necessarily great, leaving her less and less time to enter into the aims and pursuits of her husband.

Michael accompanied her often to her balls and her fêtes—always in the first years of their married life; Daisy wishing him to take the place she meant him to hold.

But she need not have feared his being slighted. The fashionable world, with one of its sudden caprices, would have made much of him if he had allowed it to do so. The man's own splendid strength and beauty, his natural power, mental and physical, coupled with the wealth and position he had gained—the latter, of course, having the greatest weight—made him a hero of romance to the mind of society. But he had as little inclination to be admired or lionised as he had to live the life which fashion demanded.

The air of society stifled and oppressed him, and whenever he could free himself, he went to his books or the work he had made for himself. He had nothing in common with the people among whom he was thrown, the love of his wife being the single chain that bound him to their rich and frivolous world.

Fettered and bound as he was, he conquered his fate in that he found that everywhere work was waiting to be done.

Envied, admired, respected, possessed of one blessing above all others—a blessing that even a frivolous society could understand when it belonged to men and women in so rich and high a position—that of a

love that made his marriage proverbial for its happiness, not one suspected that, to the end of his days, Michael Laurie could never listen to the cry of the grasshoppers without a bitter-sweet smile coming to his lips, as his thoughts would go back to a day when a certain goddess had prayed that the mortal she loved might have eternal life, but forgot to ask that his nature might become as hers. Without which he might never be contented and satisfied.

PETROLEUM.

It is popularly supposed that petroleum is an American "institution" not more than twenty or thirty years old. Even Mr. E. V. Smalley, in his most interesting paper on the subject in the July number of *The Century Magazine*, writes almost as if the discovery mentioned by Dr. Hildreth, in 1826, of oil in a brine-shaft in Ohio, were the first knowledge of the mineral. It seems to us that this should rather be called the first instance of "striking oil," although Colonel Drake, in 1859, gets the credit of being the first striker. In the case of the Ohio man, the find was accidental in sinking for salt water; in the case of Drake it was intentional. It is a mistake, however, to suppose that either was the beginning of the knowledge and employment of petroleum.

In Asia, and also in Eastern Europe, a natural mineral oil—which is what petroleum is—has been known for quite four thousand years. It was known to the people of Nineveh, as Layard's researches have proved, and it has been held that the "slime" with which, according to the Biblical record, that city was built, was nothing but a semi-solidified petroleum. At the springs of Is, on the Euphrates, there are wells which to this day supply the district with oil, and which, without doubt, supplied Nineveh and Babylon of old.

The oil-wells of Zante were known to the Romans five centuries before Christ, and that the illuminating qualities of oil were understood is evident from the fact that the "Sicilian oil" used in the lamps was, as mentioned by Pliny, obtained from the oil-wells of Agrigentum. Even farther west, the oil must have been found at a comparatively remote period, for the city of Genoa was long lighted with oil derived from wells on the Taro. The curious

mineral tallow long found in wells in Galicia, in Moldavia, and occasionally in Scotland—sometimes called Hatchetine, and sometimes Ozokerite—is just a semi-solid petroleum.

Idrialine is another mineral deposit, found for many centuries in various parts of the world, and almost identical in chemical composition with petroleum. The bituminous asphalts of Switzerland, Sweden, Wallachia, Mexico, Barbadoes, Trinidad, and elsewhere, are all of the same family, and are all old acquaintances.

And here it should be explained that although the terms mineral wax, mineral tallow, mineral grease, and mineral fat are frequently used, the product to which they are applied has really no analogy with wax or tallow. In fact, it is its want of affinity with any other known substance which has led to the adoption of the name paraffine—from *parum affinis* (little akin).

In Asia, petroleum has been found on the shores of the Caspian Sea from time immemorial. In Hindustan it has been found for centuries, and "Rangoon" oil was brought to this country many years before Drake's lucky "strike."

Even in America itself there are evidences that many centuries ago petroleum was unearthed to a considerable extent. Old workings have been found, in which trees are now growing, bearing the marks of hundreds of years' growth.

Later on in the history of the American continent, the product was known to at least the Seneca Indians, but they used it for varnishing their skins and for mixing with their war-paint. A French traveller, in 1750, described a religious ceremony of the Indians which he attended in the Alleghany mountains. The site was where a small stream entered the river, and the surface of this stream was covered with a thick scum. After an oration from the chief, a torch was applied to this scum, and great flames broke out on the surface of the water amid the shouts of the tribes. The site has been identified as that of Oil Creek in Pennsylvania, but there is some doubt of the religious character of the ceremony described. Mr. Smalley says that prior to 1859 the product on Oil Creek was utilised by a patent medicine company, who collected and sold it under the name of Seneca Oil.

In 1833, Professor Lilliman gave an account, in the pages of *The American Journal of Science*, of a spring which he

visited in the western part of Alleghany County, N.Y. In this case there was "no outlet above ground, no stream flowing from it. It is . . . a stagnant water with no other circulation than that which springs from the changes of temperature and from the gas and petroleum that are constantly rising on the surface of the pool."

After contrasting its appearance with that of the "Oil-well at St. Catherine's, near Edinburgh," he described how the oil was skimmed off the surface with broad knife-shaped boards. The foul, greasy, dirty mass was then purified by being heated and strained through flannel, and was then sold to the people for curing sprains and rheumatism, and for rubbing on sores on the horses. In this connection it is noteworthy that a popular remedy of our own day—Vaseline—is simply petroleum grease.

There have been various theories advanced at different times as to the nature and origin of petroleum. These, however, may now be narrowed down to two. The first is that the oil has been distilled in the bowels of the earth from bituminous shale at a very high temperature, and was all produced at one excited and phenomenal period in the world's history. The other is that the oil is the result of distillation from bituminous shale at a low temperature, beginning almost with the formation of the strata and still continuing. The fact that the supply in America never seems to get nearer exhaustion, in spite of the enormous drain upon it, favours the latter theory. There have been repeatedly sudden diminutions in the supplies of certain areas, and sometimes a total disappearance, but new districts are always being discovered, and the yield goes on, fluctuating from time to time in rate, but always maintaining its volume.

A remarkable instance of the fluctuating character of the supply was afforded in the Cherry Grove burst, and rapid subsequent collapse, of which Mr. Smalley gives such a graphic account. In this case an entirely new area last year suddenly began to produce at the rate of thirty thousand barrels per day. The supply in this district fell off almost as quickly as it came, and within six months the whole place was a deserted wilderness again.

For information as to the methods of boring for and handling the oil, the reader cannot do better than refer to the article by Mr. E. V. Smalley, which we have mentioned. We propose to add some

further information, from our own notes, of an industry with which the present writer has been more or less connected for many years.

The oil-wells of America are of two characters, namely, those which flow spontaneously, and those which require to be pumped. Some wells have been known to spout, regularly, as much as one thousand five hundred barrels, or sixty thousand gallons, per day, so that the teeming wealth of Mr. Gilead P. Beck, in *The Golden Butterfly*, was not a gross exaggeration. With pumping, the yield in other cases has been much greater, and about 1861 there were several instances where the yield was between three thousand and four thousand barrels per day each well. The first Cherry Grove well is said to have spouted four thousand barrels the first day. In no case, however, was this excessive rate of production maintained longer than a few months. The majority of the flowing wells are now abandoned, as the old districts of supply are, as Mr. Smalley tells us, getting exhausted. The entire area of the oil-producing district of the United States is only one hundred and fifty miles in length, and varies in breadth from one to twenty miles. Yet in this comparatively small area much of the strata is either unproductive or has been already run dry. There are now about twenty thousand wells in the States, but the average yield was lately only three and a half barrels per day. A new well now generally yields by pumping from ten to thirty barrels per day—the average being about fifteen barrels—but the old wells yield so much more slowly that the average of the whole is not more than we have just stated. Indeed it seems to be growing rather less, if anything, for the statistics for July show the production of the month to have averaged only about sixty-three thousand five hundred barrels per day. There were probably, however, not more than eighteen thousand wells actually working. The average daily production in 1875 was only twenty-three thousand barrels; in 1878 it had risen to forty-two thousand barrels; in 1880 it was sixty-seven thousand barrels; in 1881 it was seventy-five thousand barrels, and in 1882, owing to a sudden accession of the Cherry Grove wells, it reached eighty-three thousand barrels. The present average, it will be seen, is below that of either of the last three years; but the production has long been in excess of the consumption, and

the stocks of refined oil in London on 31st July last were nearly fifty per cent. greater than they were in 1882.

The refining of the crude oil for market has gradually merged into a very few hands. In point of fact it is the monopoly of a gigantic combination, called the Standard Oil Company, who practically control the trade in burning-oil. Any man may bore for oil, and, if fortunate in "striking," he may do very well by selling his produce to the Standard Oil Company, who convey it through miles of pipes to their refiners. But woe to him if he attempts to refine it, and woe to the luckless store-keeper who tries to sell other oil than the Standard Company's. This tyrannical company has been known to start grocery and general stores in the small towns, for the mere purpose of underselling and eventually ruining men who have dared to deal in other oil than theirs. There probably never was in trade a monopoly so gigantic and so tyrannical as this has become. It is chafed under, denounced in the newspapers and in conversation, and cordially disliked. But it is too strong to be broken, apparently, for the capital and influence wielded by the members of the company are practically unlimited. For one thing, this company does not encourage high prices, for high prices attract competition, and competition is troublesome and expensive to the company. Their influence is always to keep down the price of burning-oil at a moderate level, and thus the consumer, at any rate, is not injured by the monopoly.

Besides the production of the United States, there is a considerable production in Canada. The yield in 1882 was forty-five thousand barrels per month. The deposits on the shores of the Caspian Sea have of late been greatly developed. At Baku there are nearly four hundred works actively producing petroleum, and in 1881 as much as one hundred and ten thousand tuns, or, say, seven hundred thousand barrels, equal to twenty-eight million gallons, was exported from Baku. It has been principally sent heretofore into Central Asia, but the completion of the line of railway to Batoum will no doubt bring it extensively into European markets. The Caspian oil is slightly inferior to the American oil in illuminating properties, but its residuum is richer in useful products. The method employed in the Baku district is boring, and when the shafts reach the deposits, the eruption is

usually very violent, and spouting will continue for some days. There are surface-wells, also, however, where the oil oozes out spontaneously, and on the surface of the Caspian Sea itself the oil is always found floating, as if discharged from some springs under the sea. It had been the custom to skim this supply from the surface of the water, long before boring was attempted. As regards other sources of supply, we may add that a natural oil of excellent quality is produced in Bavaria, in Hanover, in Roumania, and in the Limogne Valley in France. Quite lately it was announced that valuable deposits had been discovered in the upper provinces of the Argentine Republic.

We have indicated the dimensions of the petroleum industry in America, but it is practically impossible to estimate the amount of money invested in it. Millions have doubtless been expended in sinking for wells never found, and in working wells now abandoned. The cost of sinking a well, with complete apparatus, is, according to Mr. Smalley, between six hundred and eight hundred pounds. Then to the aggregate of the first cost of all the wells sunk or being sunk, has to be added the capital employed in barrel-making, refining, conveying, etc. We have found it impossible to gather data on which to form even a guess at the total.

Of the mineral oil obtained by the destructive distillation of shale, and called paraffin-oil, it but remains to say that in nature it is similar to petroleum. In the one case Nature gives us the raw material, and leaves us to liquefy it; in the other, she distils it for us in her own subterranean laboratory. The manufacture of paraffin-oil from bituminous shale is a most important one in Scotland, although as a source of supply of illuminating material it is nothing in comparison with the natural oil. The amount of capital employed by the public companies in Scotland is nearly two million pounds, and it yields in general a good return. The entire production of burning-oil, however, in one year, in Scotland, is estimated by some not to exceed what the world consumes in one week. The Scotch manufacturers find more profit in utilising the other products obtained in distilling the shale than in making oil for burning. The latter was originally the first object of the industry, but now in importance it is little more than a bye-product.

The price of the Scotch oil fluctuates in

sympathy with the price of the American oil, which is one of the most fluctuating commodities in modern commerce. The variations in the supply naturally attract speculation, which is confined, one may say, to operations in the crude oil. The storekeepers issue certificates somewhat analogous to the iron-warrants of Glasgow, and these are tossed from hand to hand, sometimes in a perfect fever of speculation. As an instance of the excessive fluctuations in the price of these "crude certificates," it may be mentioned that in 1882 the range was between fifty cents and one hundred and thirty cents. It would not be unsafe to infer that more money is lost in America in speculative dealings in oil-certificates than is made in oil-producing. The volume of these transactions is often in a single week equal to more than double the total stock of crude oil in the country.

JENIFER.

BY ANNIE THOMAS (MRS. PENDER-CUDLIP).

CHAPTER XXXII. NO MEANS.

THAT Jenifer got through her song creditably was all that could be said. She sang it faultlessly as far as tune and time go; but without the expression that would have gone to the hearts of her audience and warmed it.

Sounds of approbation were very faint when she finished, and she hurried off with the feeling that she had failed signally, and that nothing should ever tempt her to face that awful public again. But when she came among the professionals who had passed through this sort of thing themselves, she revived under their reassuring remarks.

"It's a cold house to-night," one of them said. "I don't believe the greatest favourite that ever trod these boards would get an encore from them. Besides, they were employed in looking at you, instead of listening to you."

"I couldn't hear myself," poor Jenifer confessed.

"You won't feel like that the next time," an old hand assured her, and Madame Voglio put in:

"If you had been thinking of what you were singing, instead of thinking only of your friends in front, you would have done brilliantly. But never mind. You go on with others next time. You will be kind enough to remind yourself that you are not

the sole object of attraction and remark. It will give you courage, and you will do."

"Thank you," Jenifer said gratefully, and then she had to go and speak to her husband, who had not been admitted to the artists' room.

"What in the world was the matter with you, Jenifer?" he commenced in heightened tones, that showed her plainly enough the rage and disappointment within him.

"I was nervous, I suppose."

"Nervousness be hanged! I thought you had more sense than to give way to any silly school-girlish self-consciousness."

"Don't speak so loudly, Harry; they'll hear you in the artists' room, and—they've all been so kind to me."

"Condoling with you, and making you more nervous still, I suppose! You're trembling now—actually shivering. Oh, you'll never get a note out, you'll make a most awful fiasco if you don't pull yourself together."

"I didn't tremble till——"

"Till what?" he interrupted impatiently.

"Till I came to you."

"Oh, I see! I mustn't offer a remark, or venture to give you a word of counsel," he said pettishly, and then he went out of the room, banging the door behind him, while Jenifer went back to the artists' room palpitating with nervousness and just resentment.

This, this man to whom she was married, tied, bound, chained, was the first, the only one, to reproach her with a failure which she would for the sake of others have averted at the cost of her own life's happiness! This was the man who, on the night that he proposed to her, had made her believe that he would gladly brave all life's evils with and for her, if only she would let him!

And now the first slight check had come, and he was cross about it! Cross and unreasonable, and unsympathetic, and masterful. And she was his wife, and it was her duty to bear all these things patiently.

If only he had been kind! She required no flattery, no maudlin sympathy, no false appreciation. All she wanted was kindness, and he had not shown it to her. He had been angry, and had shown his anger, because she had failed in one of the dearest objects of her life! It was awful to her that he should have the power of making her so miserable, when she was blameless. Still, he had the power, and she knew it.

It was a wretched wait that she had in the artists' room before the time came for her to go up with the well-established favourites, and make her second struggle for fame. They were all so easily and happily self-possessed and confident. Would it ever be her happy lot to feel as they did? she wondered.

At last, after what had seemed an interminable period, the fateful moment arrived, and Jenifer marched as resolutely as if she liked it up the steps in the wake of the voluminous contralto.

A deafening burst of applause greeted the always popular queen of the concert-boards, and gathering strength and courage from the sound, though it was not meant to stimulate her, Jenifer held up her head, blinked away the mists that had been dimming her sight, and prepared to sing her part with all her strength and intelligence.

She heard herself singing well for the first few bars with rapturous pleasure. She knew that her glorious voice was commanding attention and admiration, and would command success. But in a luckless instant her eyes fell upon her husband's face in the stalls. A set, eager, fiercely expectant-of-failure expression was on it, and a recollection of his past unkindness, and dread of it in the future, made her catch her breath too quickly, falter, fail to recover herself, and sing a series of wrong notes that called forth expressions of dissatisfaction from every quarter of the hall.

There was an ominous pause. She felt that the great contralto was flashing glances of fury at her. Still, when it came to her turn, she came in again, and almost succeeded as at first. But her nerves were shaken, her confidence was gone. Amidst groans and hisses, the quartette that was to have established her with the public came to an end. The contralto caught up a part of her voluminous satin and lace draperies, and swept off in a passion without acknowledging the ringing "bravas" which were accorded to her. As soon as the audience had hissed Jenifer, an inopportune nail caught a part of the lace flounce, and its owner was too irate to pause to have it cleared. Accordingly, yards of rare Mechlin trailed after her in tatters, and Jenifer, following the wrathful owner of it, felt that the ruined lace would give additional weight to her punishment.

There was war in the artists' room! Never again, the outraged contralto de-

clared, would she appear on the boards at any concert at which Miss Jenifer Ray was announced. The infuriated favourite insisted on taking some part of the insult to herself.

"For the first time in her career," she said, "she had been hissed and hooted; and all through the vain and ignorant presumption of a woman who couldn't sing at all, presuming to sing with her."

The unfortunate projector of the concert was compelled to promise to cancel Miss Jenifer Ray's engagement on the spot. He was also coerced into going in front and announcing that Miss Jenifer Ray would not sing again that night. And Jenifer had to endure all this unsupported by a single word of sympathy or kindness.

"Do you mean to tell me it's all up, and that after having misled me with the idea that you were on the high-road to fame and fortune, you're going to let everything slide without making further efforts?" he asked gloomily as they drove home.

"Oh, it's no use—no use my trying; even Madame Voglio told me that. The horrible failure I made to-night made them all turn against me, and all refuse ever to appear with me again. I must bear the misery and disappointment as well as I can," she said piteously.

"That's easy enough for you to say, but how are we to live, I should like you to tell me?" he said harshly. He did not mean to be cruel to this beautiful woman whom he had married rather against her will; but the blow to his pride and to his greedy hopes was more than his brain could bear.

"Perhaps when I get over this, I may be able to teach," she said humbly.

"Teach! What fatuous nonsense you talk! As if you're ever likely to make a fortune by teaching."

"Not a fortune, but perhaps enough to pay my share of the expenses of our house."

"How irritating you are, Jenifer, and selfish into the bargain," he said peevishly. "Your share of the expenses! as if you were the only one to be considered. Am I to starve, may I ask?"

"Surely your salary will keep you from starvation if I cost you nothing or buy little."

"What salary?"

"The secretaryship; you told me it was seven hundred a year."

"So it was, but deluded and misled by your great expectations, I gave up my own

independence in order the more thoroughly to look after your interests and manage your affairs; and this is my reward. You coolly tell me that you can make enough to keep yourself, and that I must do the best I can."

She was glad, when he said this, that it was too dark to see his face. What meanness and vindictive greed of gain must be overshadowing it, when he could so degrade himself as to speak to her in this way! And he was the man who had always seemed so gay-hearted, frank, and generally unselfish, until she married him!

Mrs. Ray had not gone to the concert. Extreme sensitiveness about Jenifer, she had felt, might be productive of tears in public, tears of joy she had thought they would be, for the possibility of Jenifer's failing had never occurred to her. Tears in public would, she had already ascertained, rouse all the latent venom in Captain Edgecumb's nature. She had not come to the pass of hating her son-in-law yet, but she was very much afraid of him.

So now, when they got themselves into the house, without staying to look at their tell-tale faces, the dear old lady burst into loving congratulations and tears on her daughter's neck. And Jenifer gently whispered to her:

"Don't say anything about it, don't ask me anything to-night, dear mother, before Harry. I am sure he's not well, and everything seems to annoy him."

Then Mrs. Ray knew that her daughter's husband was that overwhelming force in a house—a weak man with a bad temper.

In the course of the next day there came a note of intended condolence from Effie:

"MY DEAR JENIFER,—Both Hugh and I are very much put out at your having been so feebly nervous last night; you would have done capitally, everyone said, if your country training hadn't stood in your way. You'll have to try again, of course. Mr. Whittler was there with us, and he says he'll 'put you on the dramatic boards.' You'll have to go to America with him. I think we shall all go at the same time, for Flora wants change and recreation dreadfully. It's no good coming to say we're vexed about you, is it? Captain Edgecumb looked too cross to be recognised with safety last night. If Hugh ever glared at me in such a way I'd get out of reach of the glaring.

"Flora sends her love. Is that horrid Mrs. Jack gone yet? Yours affectionately,
"EFFIE."

The contents of this note Jenifer did not communicate to anyone, but she was glad she had received it, when a few days after her first and last appearance on the concert-boards, her husband said to her:

"I should think you could get up a decent little dinner, couldn't you, Jenifer?"

"I should think I could," she said, smiling.

"Just a little party of six or eight."

"But, my dear Harry, hadn't we better wait till some one asks us to dinner first?"

"No occasion for that in this case. I want to ask Whittler here—he's a bachelor and can't invite you, so that's all right. Then I want Hugh and Effie, and Mrs. Jervoise to meet him."

"To me the idea of giving a dinner-party at all now is ridiculous."

"You're very obliging to say so," he replied testily; "but as I particularly wish to be civil to Whittler, you'll put your sense of the ridiculous aside, if you please, and just do as I ask you. Your own brother and his wife can hardly be objectionable to you, I should think."

"But why Mr. Whittler and Mrs. Jervoise?"

"Because there's every prospect of Whittler being very useful to us. He takes a great interest in you, and if you play your cards well he will give you an American engagement, that will put us on our legs again. That is 'why' Whittler. Mrs. Jervoise will come because—because she's a good-natured woman, and Whittler likes to meet her."

"Have you asked them already, Harry?"

"Well, I have, to tell the truth."

"I hope you'll always tell me that, however hard and unpleasant it may be for me to hear it. But about Mr. Whittler's kind intentions concerning me, I wish you had consulted me before. I don't mean to go on the dramatic stage; I've no talent for it."

"No; your talent is for the concert-boards, as we all know," he said with something approaching a sneer. "As to your not meaning to go on the stage, I shall be very much hurt and surprised if you selfishly throw away an opportunity of redeeming our fortunes. However, I'll leave Whittler to talk to you. I've asked them for eight on Thursday night. Do turn out a decent dinner."

"I shall have to go to my mother for the money to pay for it; you've given me no housekeeping money yet, Harry, and the little I had I've spent."

Captain Edgecumb grumbled, but produced a cheque, which he handed to his wife with the admonition :

"Do be careful about the expenses, Jenifer. It's most unfortunate that I should have been led to believe that your success as a concert-singer was an ascertained fact. Had it not been for that, I shouldn't have resigned the secretaryship, and that, you must remember, I did entirely in your interests."

To this Jenifer made no reply. If he believed that any reckless folly he had committed had been in the furtherance of her interests, it was useless to attempt to undeceive him. His delusion was the offspring of selfishness and greed, and it would be hard to kill—as hard, in fact, to kill as it would be for her to live with it.

So she took the cheque, and simply said she would spend it as carefully as she could.

"We have never been extravagant people," she added.

"Well, I don't know. For your father to have cut your mother and you off as he did points to his having had a suspicion that you were both inclined to extravagance ; though, for my own part, I never can make out what women find to spend their money upon. Everything is provided for them, yet they'll fritter away an income in personal extravagances."

"That remark scarcely applies to my mother or to me, Harry."

"Oh, it applies to all women ! You have no idea of practical economy. If any cutting down of expenditure is suggested to a woman, she probably suggests burning fewer wax-candles and going without dessert, instead of striking at the root of the evil."

"The root of the evil with me will be want of money, Harry. If you'll show me the way, I'll strike at it," she said in feverish weariness.

And he told her :

"All right ; I'll remind you of that promise when Whittler dines here."

"I think I'll stay in my own room rather more, Jenny dear," her mother said to her that night. "I fancy I disturb

Captain Edgecumb ; and I know young people like to be by themselves."

All Jenifer could say in reply was :

"Oh, mother, mother ! is this what I've married for ?"

On the very morning of the little dinner-party which she was giving so sorely against her will and feeling, Jenifer had a letter from her godfather, telling her that the sweetest and best woman in the world, Mrs. Hatton, would be his wife—the solace and support of his old age—before she (Jenifer) received that letter.

"Come over and stay with us as soon as you can," he added. "We are going to begin as we mean to go on—at Kildene. No honeymooning away from home for us."

Captain Edgecumb sent home every reasonable delicacy he could find, and insisted on Jenifer's engaging a professional cook to prepare them, so bent was he upon making a favourable impression upon the palate of Mr. Josiah H. Whittler.

Everything seemed fairly in train for a good dinner and a pleasant evening, when Jenifer unfortunately dashed his spirits by giving him her news.

"I have had a letter from Admiral Tullamore, Harry. What do you think has happened ?"

"That woman hasn't hooked him ? Don't tell me that."

"He is married to Mrs. Hatton by this time," she laughed. "Poor dear old man, I hope she'll be kind to him !"

"The deuce !" her husband rejoined laconically.

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of hungry relations who, upon her marriage, inundated her with piteous appeals for help. She did what she could for them, sending them all she was able to save and scrape together by daily and trying self-denials. But she revived by a pension the heart of a second cousin of Mr. Tuck's—a widow—who dunned him periodically and to small purpose, and gave up at last in despair upon hearing of his marriage. Mrs. Tuck, by continual and skilful appeals to her husband's family pride, wheedled him into allowing her fifty pounds a year. This was not only generous but—harder still to a woman and an Irishwoman—just. And this was not all. On the widow's death—five years later—Mrs. Tuck, playing still upon the same chord of family pride, at last persuaded Mr. Tuck to adopt her destitute daughter. So Ida Luard comes into our story.

Poor little Ida! Life had been very hard with her up to her thirteenth year. She had been her mother's mother for nearly a year before that poor lady died—nursing her in her paralytic helplessness as devotedly as she had herself been nursed by her but a few years before in her infancy. At the same time—but this was nothing new to her—she kept the accounts, paid bills, studied stringent economies, and held things together as well as when these hard cares were shared by her mother. For, indeed, it is truer to say that she had shared these cares with her mother, than to say that her mother had shared them with her. Mrs. Luard had been the most helpless of women and had clung like a climbing-plant to the nearest support, which happened to be Ida. Thus the girl really passed almost at a step from infancy to womanhood. For her natural precocity was not only encouraged by her mother's dependence upon her, but was forced by trouble, as a plant is forced upwards by being hedged round with darkness.

Miss Ida at thirteen was older than most girls at eighteen, and gave Mrs. Tuck from her letters the impression that she was of that interesting age. The writing, indeed, was childish, but this Mrs. Tuck attributed to an imperfect education. As for the matter and the wording of the matter, they were as old as trouble, which was mostly their burden.

"DEAR MRS. TUCK,—Mother died last night. She did not know me or anyone, and had no pain, the doctor thinks. He will not take any fee, though he has

attended mother for nearly a year. But I am afraid from what I hear that the funeral will cost twelve pounds, and I write to ask if Mr. Tuck would kindly let me have a quarter in advance, as there are other expenses too. I am so sorry to have to ask for it, but I do not know what else to do. The funeral will be on Saturday.—Believe me, truly yours, IDA LUARD."

Mrs. Tuck's pity, when she read this note, was chequered with a misgiving that it was thrown away. The girl who could announce her mother's death in so cold and dry a tone could hardly feel it very deeply. Nevertheless, she persuaded Mr. Tuck to allow her to ask Ida to stay a while with them that she might gauge the girl to the bottom.

Meanwhile the wretched writer of this cold and dry letter was sitting with a frozen heart by her mother's corpse. She was an undemonstrative child, could seldom cry, and was little likely to be able to cry now. Hearts born dumb suffer horribly; for, as a rule, their feelings are deeper, and therefore in more need of relief, than hearts which can give sorrow words. Poor Ida so suffered, and her o'erfraught heart found only one strange relief. Her mother had been passionately fond of flowers, and the child's thoughts found distraction in devising some way to procure flowers for the coffin and the grave. Flowers were very expensive luxuries then and there—in winter and in a town—and Ida was not at all sure of the twelve pounds from Mr. Tuck. Her bitter training had taught her to think it wrong to spend a farthing on anything beyond absolute necessities; and to run into debt for her mother's funeral would have seemed to her little short of sacrilege. She scandalised her two or three neighbours by the disrespect she showed to her mother's memory in refusing to buy new black—even gloves. She had always dressed in black, it is true, but it was rusty, darned in some places, and thin and threadbare throughout. But though she wouldn't buy black she must buy flowers. The longing for them was so mixed up in her mind with longing thoughts about her mother, that she came to imagine her mother longing for them too. She must have them.

She stole out at night, and made her way against the driving rain into the crowded and cruel solitude of the great city. She stopped at a jeweller's shop, and stood at the door till she had got thoroughly wet through before she summoned courage

to enter. Within, too, she had to wait long at the entrance end of the counter while customer after customer came and went, and would have had to wait longer if suspicion had not called a shopman to her.

"Well, what do you want?" gruffly. Certainly Ida looked little like a jeweller's customer.

"Please, what will you give me for this?" handing him a gold chain which Mrs. Tuck had sent her at Christmas.

"Give you for it? I'll give you in charge for it. Here, Tiplady," calling an assistant; and turning again to Ida. "You'll get three months for it, I dare say. You'll——" Here, looking more at the girl's face than at her clothes, he paused.

The wan and worn cheek, wistful mouth, and great, dark, solemn eyes, which had looked so long at sorrow as to have caught its very expression, shook his intention, if not his suspicion.

"Never mind, Tiplady. Look here, my girl, put that back where you got it, do you hear? You've had a narrow escape."

Ida took back the chain without a word. She was a reserved child, and was little likely to attempt an explanation to a stranger. Hurrying from the shop, and out of the main street, she made her way, swiftly and as one who would outstrip second thoughts that might arrest her, to a pawnbroker's. It was not the first time she had been there—for her poor shiftless mother in the early days of her illness had sent her there more than once—but Ida not the less abhorred the place and its approaches. It was a foul den in a frowsy street, like a filthy cobweb in a vault, and had been chosen by her mother for its obscurity. Ida did not linger long at the door here, for the street had more terrors even than the office for her.

"How much?" she asked in a voice that trembled like her hand, as well from the breathless haste she had made as from nervousness.

Of course the pawnbroker shared the jeweller's suspicion with more reason and less reprobation, for he dealt much in stolen goods, and was of the liberal opinion of Falstaff: "'Tis my vocation, Hal; 'tis no sin for a man to labour in his vocation." At the same time, as it was a hazardous vocation, he needed a heavy premium to cover the risk.

"Two shillings," after weighing the chain carefully in his hand first, and then in a balance.

The child hesitated; she knew this wasn't a twentieth part of its value, and griping necessity had made keenness in money matters an instinct with her. The man, noticing her hesitation, sneered:

"Better ask the police what you should get for it. They're like to know more about it than me; they are——"

"I'll take two shillings," faltered the helpless child.

The pawnbroker saw in a moment from her manner that she was utterly at his mercy.

"You'll take that for it," he said, flinging a shilling down on the counter, thinking all disguise unnecessary as they were alone in the office. Ida took up the shilling and the ticket without a word, and hurried from the office.

She ran at full speed, keeping in the middle of the street, hurrying in the fear that the great flower-shop might be closed. In fact, it was this fear that made her submit without a word to the robbery. But the shop was not closed, and Ida, after choosing her flowers in the window, crept timidly into it, and waited long while the two young lady assistants were engrossed with a jovial old gentleman, who was giving a large order for flowers, interspersed with badinage of the commercial traveller kind—the verbal equivalent of a chuck under the chin. At last one of the young persons, in turning aside her superb head with a toss in graceful offence at some delightful compliment, caught sight of the miserable little figure in shabby black, drenched and dragged with the rain.

"Well?" she asked, sharp as the snap of a steel trap.

"Please, how much are those flowers?" pointing to them.

"Those? Five shillings," turning away at once in the certainty that the price was prohibitive.

Ida was an expert in the price of bread and coals, but not in that of flowers. Poor little woman! it took her a minute to get over the disappointment, so as to be able to ask in a voice unsteady with anxiety, "Please, what can you give me for this?" holding out the shilling in her shaking hand.

The shop-girl went to the window, and fetched thence a single camelia!

There is deep truth to nature in Herodotus's account of the grief of the captive king Psammetichus, who saw without a tear his daughter led to slavery, and his son to death, but wept piteously at

sight of his servant in chains. Those sorrows were too deep for tears, but not this.

Ida had not shed a tear since her mother's death till now. But now, here, in this public place, at this mere far-off attendant sorrow, she broke down utterly. She clung with both hands spasmodically to the counter, while one great dry sob upon another seemed to shake her whole frame.

"Hey! what's this—what's this?" cried the old gentleman, trying to raise the child's head which was sunk upon the counter. "Come, come, come," soothingly, and then turning to the shop-girl: "What's the matter?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," in a drawl of indifference, resenting this outburst as though it had no other meaning than that of a personal rebuke to herself. "She wanted some flowers in the window that were too expensive for her."

"What! cry for flowers? Tut, tut, tut, tut, tut!" as though speaking to a baby. But Ida at this moment, raising her head to hurry in shame from the shop, the old gentleman saw more than a childish grief in that forlorn face. "Hey, child—what flowers did she want?" to the shop-girl. "No, don't go, dear, you shall have them. She's in trouble, depend upon it," in an apologetic aside to the young lady who was wrapping the flowers round with paper. He feared he was forfeiting his character as a gallant gay Lothario.

"There, child, there," handing her the flowers.

Ida looked up with a beautiful expression of gratitude in her set, sad eyes, but said only, "Thank you, sir," in a voice whose refinement surprised the old gentleman.

"Some one dead," said he in a subdued voice, not interrogatively, but as assuring the child that he understood the case.

"My—my mother," sobbed Ida, losing again her self-control.

"Ah, poor child!" he said, very much affected.

He had never before seen such deep-seated sadness in a face, and that the face of a child. He went with her to the door, as though only to open it for her, and whispered as she passed out:

"Wait a minute."

He then returned to the young ladies to say that, as he was going to ride home, he would take the boxes of flowers with him. He took one out as if to a cab, but put it into Ida's arms.

"There, child, a few more. God bless you!" and was back into the shop before she could utter a word.

He then got the other box and rode home with it.

This grey-headed old gentleman was proud of his not very seemly gallantry, but of his goodness he was ashamed.

Ida hurried home with a heart lighter for her tears, for the old gentleman's sympathy, but above all, for his present. We despair of giving an adequate idea of the kind and the depth of the yearning of the child for these flowers. To do something for her mother had been the daily bread of her heart. Since her death her heart was starved, famished, hungering and thirsting for one morsel of meat, for the least of all the little offices of love which had been the joy and duty of her life for the last year. These flowers were as a cup of cold water to parched lips. She had not a fancy, but a faith, that her mother would not only know of them, but be glad of them with a fuller consciousness and joy than when she was alive.

Reaching home she stole up to the room with a strange feeling that she had been a long time away, and that something, she knew not what, might have happened, she knew not how. She paused for a moment before she turned the key and the door-handle, and entered the frozen silence of a chamber of death. Only the hollow and aching stillness we all know too well, by which the dead seems to infect the very air with death.

Through the reaction of the disappointment of her vague expectation of some vague relief—born in part of the joy the flowers gave her—Ida came to realise her loss vividly for the first time. She flung herself on her knees by the bed, and mingled, with a wild incoherence, the prayer she had said daily, and many times a day, for her mother's recovery with appeals to the dead to speak to her only once, and with convulsive sobs in the certainty that she was lost to her for ever. It was a tempestuous outburst for so self-contained a child, the letting loose of long-pent waters, and the relief was proportionately great. She rose from her knees calmer, more collected and composed, than she had been since her loss; and after looking long at the still face, smoothing back the grey hair with the tender touch of a mother's hand on the head of her sleeping child, and kissing the chill brow, she turned to find revived consolation in

her flowers. Those in the box were more exquisite even than she had hoped for, and she sat far into the night weaving a wreath of the choicest of them, and arranging and re-arranging the others to get as near as she could to the indefinite ideal in her mind of the disposition of them that would best please her mother.

The funeral left the house early the next morning, for it had seven miles to go. Poor Mrs. Luard, country born and bred, and passionately fond of the country, could not endure the idea of being buried in a town, or even in a cemetery. She had fixed upon a little churchyard seven miles out of town, in which, in summer, you scarce could see the graves for flowers; for she had to give up all idea of being buried beside her husband, since it would have involved the expense of a railway journey of over fifty miles. So the funeral started early. Such a funeral! To this day Ida's old neighbours talk of it with subdued bitterness. They had taken mortal offence at many things. In the first place, Ida could not bear her dead mother to be made a show of, and would not have them flocking in to enjoy the spectacle of the corpse. In the second place, she had forgotten to "bid" any of them to the funeral, and her sullen servant, who should have reminded her of this piece of etiquette, was in deep dudgeon at not being presented with a suit of mourning. And in the third place, there were to be no wine and biscuits at the funeral, nor gin and tea after it. These things notwithstanding, two or three kindly neighbours would certainly have attended the funeral, if they had not thought that the attention would be an intrusion; for all Ida's sins of omission and commission were traced to one source—pride.

When, then, the funeral started, the poor child was not only chief mourner, but sole mourner. Not another creature accompanied it. Never was there such a funeral. Her loneliness, however, did not and could not add to her desolation, and, indeed, was not noticed by her as singular, so used had she grown to it, and so absorbed was she in her sorrow.

The undertaker's men, seeing but one mourner, and she a child, apportioned their pace to the small amount of sorrow they seemed to convey, so that the funeral reached the church twenty minutes too soon, and surprised there the clergyman's wife, who was practising on the organ the hymn-tunes for the following day, Sunday.

On hearing the bell toll she closed the organ, and was about to go across to the vicarage for her husband, when he entered and began the service. Then she remained fixed and fascinated by the sight of the single mourner. She looked at the child till she could not see her through tears. This little creature in rusty and threadbare black, alone and with the lost look of long loneliness and of an unsearchable sorrow in her wan face, without one in the wide world to stand with her by the grave of her last friend!

When the lesson had been read, and the coffin borne from the church, the lady followed Ida to the grave, standing there a little behind her, in reverence of her lonely sorrow, till the service was over, and the clergyman returned to the church.

Ida still stood gazing upon the coffin, unconscious that the service was over, till at last the sexton came and took up his shovel to fill up the grave.

Then the lady took timidly the child's hand in hers, as we touch for the first time a consecrated symbol, and said, "Come, dear," in a tone that Ida had thought she would never hear again.

She looked up and saw a face like the voice—in tears—the sweetest face she had ever seen—we have ever seen—the face of our old friend, Mrs. John. Then there came into the child's sad eyes that beautiful expression which had so touched the old gentleman in the flower-shop—an expression of surprised gratitude lighting up her face, like a sudden sun-burst in a dreary day.

"You'll come into the vicarage for a moment? I am the clergyman's wife. Just for a moment to warm yourself—your hand is like ice."

"Thank you, I must get back," said Ida hurriedly, shrinking into her shell at the mere thought of facing strangers at such a moment.

The sweet and plaintive voice told the same story as the refined and hopeless face. Both would have haunted Mrs. John ever after, if she had not done all she could to win the child's confidence in the hope of being a help to her. But Ida's confidence was not an easy thing to be won, even by Mrs. John.

"Only for a moment, dear," urged Mrs. John pleadingly, and as though asking a favour.

They had reached the gate of the churchyard, and Mrs. John, without waiting for Ida's answer, said to the driver of the cab:

"Perhaps you could wait a few minutes? You could put your horse up at the vicarage, and have some dinner yourself."

"All right, mum," touching his hat, and making at once across the way to the vicarage.

"You need see no one, dear," continued Mrs. John hurriedly, in answer to a look of distress in the child's face.

Ida accompanied her in a silence that seemed ungracious, yet the poor child was touched to the very heart, not by Mrs. John's words only, but by her face, her tone, her tears. But she never could express her feelings adequately.

Mrs. John hurried her into the house and into the study, set her in a chair by the fire, fetched a glass of wine, pressed it upon her, and then stood by her in silence, speaking only through soft touches of her hand, smoothing the child's hair.

Suddenly Ida looked up to express her thanks in her own fashion.

"It was my mother."

Mrs. John understood this scant confidence as it was meant, as the melting of the child's chilled heart under kindness.

"Yes, dear," assentingly, as of a self-evident thing.

Again there was silence for a minute, Mrs. John hoping for a further confidence which did not come. Ida looked up once as if about to say something, but only her wide, wistful eyes spoke.

Mrs. John, looking through them into her heart, hesitated no longer.

"Have you no father, dear?"

"No."

"Nor brother, nor sister?"

"No; I've no one now," with a forlorn look into the fire.

The settled sadness of her tone and gaze upset the soft-hearted Mrs. John, so that Ida, looking up to add something, found her crying quietly. The ice on the child's heart, which had gradually been melting under all this warmth of sympathy, now gave way altogether.

"I wish—I wish——" she sobbed, and then could not speak for sobbing.

"What, dear?" asked Mrs. John eagerly, when Ida's paroxysm had subsided. "What do you wish?"

"I wish mother had known you."

Ida now need feel no compunction about not being able to speak her thanks. She could not have said more. Mrs. John felt that all the child's whole heart was in the words.

She put her arm about Ida's neck, and stooped to kiss her on the forehead, and said, after a moment's silence to master her voice, which yet was not steady:

"Don't you think, dear, mother is wishing now something like that for you—that you had some friend to speak to and trust to? I wish you would let me be your friend, my poor child."

Mrs. John's words suggested a train of thought to Ida, of which she expressed the outcome in the words, "Mother may have sent you to me?" in an awed voice, and with eager, wide, and wondering eyes.

"I think she asked God to send someone to you. You must tell me all your troubles. What is your name?"

"Ida—Ida Luard."

"You must tell me all your troubles, Ida."

The child did.

It was two hours before they returned together to Leeds to settle business matters and to fetch some things of Ida's, for she was to stay for a time at the vicarage.

When they reached her lodgings, Ida found there a letter which had come by the afternoon post.

"It's from Mrs. Tuck," said the child, as she opened the envelope.

"Mrs. Who?" exclaimed Mrs. John.

"Mrs. Tuck," answered Ida, amazed at Mrs. John's amazement. "She's the wife of that distant cousin I told you of, who sent mother money."

"Do they live at Kingsford—at The Keep?"

"Yes; how did you know? You know them?"

"I know Mr. Tuck. But there was some quarrel. You mustn't mention our name, dear, in your answer," said Mrs. John in much confusion.

"She wants me to go there on a visit!" exclaimed Ida in dismay.

"You must go, dear," said Mrs. John, and then she was silent as Ida herself—lost in troubled thought—till they reached the vicarage.

CHRONICLES OF ENGLISH COUNTIES.

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE. PART III.

THERE are few finer sites for a mediæval ruin than the red sandstone crag on which stands Nottingham Castle. But, unfortunately, the mediæval ruin is not there, and, instead, stands a commonplace enough mansion; not without a history, however, for it

was not burnt down—again rather unfortunately, which would have been a good riddance of the place—but burnt out by a reckless mob in the days of Reform Bill agitation, and stood there afterwards a lifeless shell, a mere scarecrow of a building, till it was purchased by the Corporation and made into a kind of museum and library. A sad result of the burning followed for the wild and reckless people who shared in this fire catastrophe, of whom sundry were hanged in due form of law, while no harm whatever was done to their enemy, the Duke of Newcastle, to punish whose vote against the Reform Bill this sad piece of mischief was contrived. No harm, but rather a great deal of good; twenty thousand pounds having been squeezed out of the good people of Nottingham to recoup the duke's loss—of some old furniture, that is, and of a house that he did not want. And our quarrel as chroniclers is rather with the Newcastle dukes themselves, that they could not leave the ruins of the ancient towers where they stood—the towers from which so often had floated the standard of England's kings. But the beauty of the site still remains; with its noble prospect of the great plain of the Trent; with the woods of Clifton Grove, melodiously, if feebly, sung by Kirke White, the Nottingham poet; with the town of Nottingham and its multitudinous roofs stretching away to the river, veiled with a thin haze of smoke.

And neither incendiaries nor iconoclasts could do away with Mortimer's Hole—a rude cavern at the foot of the rock, known as such ever after the tragic event which happened in the castle above. The plot reads more like a bit of some old romance than sober history. The queen and her paramour, Roger Mortimer, dwelt in all security in the royal stronghold—he, the foremost man in the kingdom, with all the reins of power in his hands—while the young king, Edward the Third, not yet of age, seemed to have forgotten the tragic end of his father at Berkeley Castle, and to have come to look upon Mortimer as his natural guardian and adviser. With all this apparent security, the precautions taken show that there was mistrust beneath. The queen and Mortimer took up their quarters in the castle keep, surrounded by a guard of a hundred and eighty faithful knights, while the young king, who had come here to meet the Parliament, lodged with only a small following in the town below.

The rude cavern known as Mortimer's Hole cannot have been overlooked in providing for the security of the castle. It communicated by a well-known passage with the outer court of the building, and seems to have been used as a storehouse, from which supplies for the castle above were frequently hauled up along the subterranean way. The passage would most certainly have been guarded by a strong postern-gate, and even were that forced, the assailants would be as far as ever from reaching the inner keep, which was occupied by the queen and Mortimer. And these circumstances have thrown some doubt upon the generally-received version of Mortimer's capture; but recent research has shown that traces exist of a more secret staircase cut in the rock opening out of the cavern, and, although choked with rubbish, still showing unmistakably that its direction was towards the very inner stronghold of the citadel; and the existence of this passage might well be known to the governor of the castle, and not to its temporary inmates.

Up the secret staircase in the dead of night climbed the king and a few faithful knights. The scene which followed almost anticipated a like tragic scene at Holyrood. The armed men penetrated into the queen's apartments; they dragged the wretched Mortimer from her arms, while she continued to shriek for mercy, and called upon her son to spare him. Mortimer was dragged down the narrow staircase, but was not then dispatched. He was reserved to be hanged at Tyburn, suffering the same ignominious death he had inflicted on the Spencers in years gone by. And yet this Mortimer was not altogether a failure, and his descendants are heard of again in history, one of them, indeed, coming to be King of England as Edward the Fourth, through whom our present royal family may claim as an ancestor the man who was hanged on Tyburn-tree—a fact, this, which should be a consolation to any who may have a "sus per col" recorded in the family annals.

But to return to Nottingham, which is finely placed at the side of its so-called castle, lying where the ridges of the forest hills run steeply into the broad valley of the Trent, perhaps the most original and picturesque of all manufacturing towns. At the point where the castle rock joins the hill upon which the town is built, the ground rises into a little mount, now all covered with houses and gardens, a lane

between which bears the inscription of Standard Hill, and this, as anyone might guess, is the exact spot where King Charles the First raised his standard in the unhappy civil wars. It was about six o'clock in the evening of a stormy and tempestuous day that the king himself, with a small train of followers, rode to the top of the castle hill. A herald came forward with tabard and trumpet, and began to read the king's proclamation, but was interrupted by the king himself, who had some scruples as to the wording of it, and who corrected the paper on his knee as he sat there on horseback. The herald stumbled over reading the newly-corrected manuscript, and thus the whole ceremony took a hue of doubt and hesitation. But at last the standard was unfurled, the banner thrown to the winds.

And haughtily the trumpets peal, and gaily dance the bells,

As slow upon the labouring wind the royal blazon swells.

But a blustering night coming on the standard was soon removed and fixed to the castle keep, but the flag was blown down before the morning, which at the time was thought an evil omen. And thus we have both the opening and the closing scene of the king's contest with the Parliament enacted in the same county and within the compass of a few miles. The raisings of the standard, that is, at Nottingham, and the final surrender to the Scots army at Southwell.

Farther away from the castle there opens out a fine market-place, perhaps the largest in the kingdom, surrounded by inns and shops, with traces here and there of a piazza before the shops, which seems at one time to have extended almost the entire circuit of the market-place. On one side there is the Poultry, where stand the vendors of live chickens and rabbits, and such small deer, just as they have done ever since the place was a town at all; while, opposite, a few chapmen may still be found with their hawkers' baskets about their once privileged quarter—the Chepeside. Here are remains, too, of the rows where the different trades established themselves, and at one time Nottingham was as famous for iron-work and hardware as Sheffield is now. The bridle-smiths have left their memory in Bridlesmith Gate, and the fraternity of smiths in general are recalled in the old saying, the origin and meaning of which are equally obscure.

The little smith of Nottingham,

Who doth the work which no man can.

But all this iron-working came to an end

about the year 1650, and then with the decline of one industry another came to the front, and the stocking-frame was invented by William Lee, in the reign of Elizabeth. How young Lee, watching in sober mood the nimble movement of his wife's fingers as she sat knitting stockings, first got the idea of imitating the process in wood and wire, has often been told and has furnished more than one English artist with a subject. But the inventor himself got little profit by his machine, and it is said that failing to secure recognition of his invention in his own country, he took his machine to Paris, and submitted it to the French king, Henry the Fourth, who had a mind to take up the invention and establish the manufacture among his subjects—but the dagger of Ravallac put an end to all that.

But about Nottingham the stocking manufacture soon took root and spread itself, finding a home among the neighbouring villages. There are many factories where stockings are made on a large scale, but the home manufacture still flourishes, and in most of the villages along Trent-side and round about, nearly every cottage has its stocking-frame, and the peculiar creaking, chirping noise it makes, something like the cry of the corn-crake over the fields, mingles pleasantly with rural sounds and with the songs of birds in the stillness of the country.

Many French Protestant refugees came and settled in these Nottinghamshire valleys, and carried on the lace and stocking manufacture. But these families soon became Anglicised, and when Blenheim had been fought and Marshal Tallard and many French officers of distinction were sent as prisoners to Nottingham, these last comers probably found hardly a French-speaking inhabitant in the place. Whether or not, the lively Frenchmen made themselves vastly at home in Nottingham, and became most popular among the good wives and especially among the children of the neighbourhood. Nottingham is famed for its light and beautiful bread, and it is said that some of this fame is due to the teaching of the French prisoners of those days, while they roused the emulation of the Nottingham folk by the elegant gardens they created about their quarters.

And yet, in spite of the amenities introduced by the Frenchmen, the stockingers of Nottingham have a reputation for considerable roughness. Such a scene as that formerly presented by Nottingham market-place during a contested election,

when the whole of the vast area, six acres or more, would be filled with a violent, excited crowd, whose yells and cries rose up with an indescribable roar of quite terrific power, might give an idea of the native energy of the Nottingham lambs—lambs in the same sense as those of Colonel Kirke—lambs, that is, from their entire want of lamb-like qualities.

In them you might fancy you saw the descendants of the troglodytes who are said to have been the aboriginal inhabitants of the district. But on ordinary occasions, and especially on market-days, the scene is of quite a different character. Carriers' carts bring in the country people, and as the day advances are waiting in a long line to carry them out again. The market is filled with shops and booths, a general fair and mart where all sorts of things are offered for sale, great store of pottery, clothes, ironmongery, books, as well as the more ordinary commodities of a country market. Indeed, Nottingham strikes the observer as being quite as much a county centre as a manufacturing town; a sort of Novgorod with its great fair, called goose fair in Nottingham, where the dealers and manufacturers from the plains may meet and barter with the nomads of the forest and the agricultural settlers from the interior. A centre, too, is Nottingham of an old-established gentry, settled in the halls round about. There is Colwick, the seat of the Musters family; and pleasant Clifton Grove, where the Cliftons have lived time out of mind; and there is Aspley, once the seat of the Willoughbys, whose old-fashioned courtesy and goodwill to their humbler neighbours have been preserved by tradition.

In the last century it was the custom at Aspley Hall for the whole country round to resort there at Shrovetide to fry pancakes. The squire found the fat and the pans and the firing, and the poor neighbours brought their own batter, and there in the great hall was a huge fire at which a dozen pans would be going at once, with great competition and laughter in the way of tossing the pancakes; the squire and his lady always presiding in their old oak chairs, and entering heartily into the general fun. And with the squire would be noticed a grave and dignified figure well known by sight, and yet rarely spoken of by the villagers. This was the Roman Catholic priest, whose ministrations were then illegal, but who carried on his mission *sub rosa*, without interference.

Then there is Wollaton, a fine Tudor mansion, whose park-gates are close to the town; a house that was attacked by the mob during the Reform Bill excitement, but that escaped without serious damage.

On the other side of Trent we come to a district of a different character, a bleak and open country known as the Wolds, stretching away into Leicestershire. But here, too, in every sheltered nook and favoured valley rise the mansions of the territorial gentry. There is Bunny, with its memories of the once famed Sir Thomas Parkyns, some of whose classic inscriptions are still to be met with, but who plumed himself upon his wrestling even more than his classic lore. In his veneration for the ancient Olympic games, and his love for athletic sports in general, he left in his will the munificent prize of a guinea a year to be wrestled for on Midsummer Day. It is told of Sir Thomas, that being visited one day by a noble lord, his very good friend and neighbour, the latter, alluding to Sir Thomas's reputation as a wrestler, besought him to give him, the noble lord, an example of his quality. The next moment his lordship found himself lying upon his back on the greensward, having been cleanly thrown over Sir Thomas's head. The noble lord picked himself up, and advanced upon his host with sundry hot words and imprecations. "My dear lord!" cried Sir Thomas, quite shocked at the way in which his civilities were taken, "consider this a proof of the high esteem I have for your lordship and your lordship's family. I have never before shown this master stroke to any person living." A mighty hunter, too, was Sir Thomas. Towards the end of the last century he was grown old, and no longer able to follow the hounds; but, hearing that the pack was coming by the Hall, he had himself dressed in his scarlet coat and hunting-cap, to sit at the open window, and cheer the passing train of dogs and huntsmen.

Then there is Willoughby, where we come upon the Fosseway again, and it is noticeable that hereabouts the road is indeed a fosse—not yet the "ramper road," but sunk so deeply in crossing the wolds that an army might march along it without being noticed from the country round about. Coming along this sunken way one day in the civil wars, two parties of hostile cavalry met, and fought out their difference in the open; with no definite result except the death of the Royalist Colonel Stanhope, who lies there in the

church with a monument over him, close by where he fell.

Owthorpe is near at hand, with monuments of the Hutchinsons, of whom Colonel Hutchinson is familiar from his wife's Memoir. After the restoration the colonel lived for some years in hiding at Owthorpe, being one of those excepted from the Act of Indemnity, but was eventually arrested and imprisoned in Deal Castle, where he died. Then there is Whatton, farther on in the Vale of Belvoir country, with a monument in the church to the father of Archbishop Cranmer. Here the future prelate and martyr was born; at the manor-house at Aslacton, that is, which is in the parish. And there is Bingham too, quietest and neatest of little county towns, with its handsome church and dignified rectory. The rectory was some while held by the Rev. Robert Lowe, a man long a terror to tramps and cadgers, a Rhadamanthus among magistrates, and the father of the sometime Chancellor of the Exchequer. Nearer the Trent is Radcliffe, with fine views of the river, valley, and of the forest hills beyond, from the steep declivity, with its broken red banks, from which the village takes its name. There in the flat meadows below, within a bend of the river, lies Shelford, with its handsome church containing the family vault of the Earls of Chesterfield, about which a good story is current.

The Shelford men, it seems, had long been remarkable at feasts, fairs, and markets for a certain smartness of apparel which had caused some little jealousy among neighbouring villages, and of which the most noticeable and excellent feature was the red velvet collar that was the inseparable ornament of a Shelford coat. In fact, the collar became the well-known badge of a Shelford man—no common thing in velveteen, but of a rich silk velvet that must have cost no end of shillings a yard. Wherever they got it from, the Shelford men seemed to enjoy a perennial supply of this gorgeous trimming, and the affair might have gone on unexplained till now but for the investigations of the vicar, who, reasoning from the fact that the village tailor was also the parish sexton, made it his business to descend privately into the Chesterfield vault, when he found, to his dismay, that the rich velvet coverings of the Chesterfield coffins had been snipped away and used for Shelford coat-collars. The vicar communicated at once with his patron, the Earl. It does not

appear whether this was the celebrated Chesterfield of the Letters—likely enough it may have been, for the Earl received the news with the amused urbanity of a man of the world, and professed himself pleased indeed that these useless trappings had been turned to such good account. But for all that, the Shelford men had much to endure from the jeers and sarcasms of their neighbours when the secret of their splendour became generally known.

But the Shelford men are only locally famous, while a remote village on the wold, in the south-west corner of the county, has attained almost European distinction. The wise men of Gotham made their first appearance in literature as early as the sixteenth century in the jest-book of Andrew Borde, the Merry Andrew—albeit his jokes seem dull and coarse enough to us—who is said to have given his name to clowns and jesters in general. But it is hard to say what originally fixed their reputation for exceeding foolishness upon the unhappy Gothamites. Were they, perhaps, a stray settlement of Goths, whose unfamiliar language and manners became the source of ridicule among their neighbours? "What fools those French are," says someone. "Why, they call a horse a shovel!" And in the same way uncultivated wit is accustomed to jeer at anything strange and unfamiliar. The same stories that are told of the men of Gotham are in other districts applied to other towns. The Gothamite attempt to build a hedge round the cuckoo is paralleled by a similar feat attributed to the men of Folkestone, and the wise men appear in different forms in many German Hausmärchen.

It would hardly do to leave the neighbourhood of the Trent without a reference to the Nottinghamshire anglers with their swiftly-running wooden reels and gossamer-like tackle, who haunt each likely reach and swim with the patience and perseverance of the heron. Mighty takes of barbel, of roach, and of bream occasionally reward the skilful piscator who has found a good pitch, and huge pike lurk in the backwaters and abandoned channels of the river. Memories arise of a pleasant inn by the river, a ferry just above, where the river runs sharply over a gravel-bed, a well-known haunt of grayling. How pleasant the swirl and plash of the river in the soft tranquility of a summer's evening, the ripples all golden in the sunshine, while the deep cool shadows of

the pool lower down are flecked by the circles made by the rising fish!

But along Trent-side, even without a fishing-rod in the hand, it is pleasant enough to saunter on a summer's day in the soft, hazy warmth of the river-valley—the river shining with softened lustre, the trees grouping themselves in noble masses, soft hills looming through the haze. Sometimes a barge comes along, heralded by a loud clap-clapping of gates. All the fields are divided by these double “clap-gates,” as people call them. The driver opens one, the horse puts his shoulder against the other, the tow-rope is swung over the posts, and away goes the barge, high-piled with deals that leave a pleasant aromatic perfume in the air. Once the writer recalls coming to a little inn by the riverside. Close by was a creek where barges tied up from Saturday to Monday on their voyage from Hull or Gainsborough to the Midlands. A boat, cut in half and stuck into the ground, served as a summer-house, where your bargee might sit and smoke his pipe and watch the tranquil river flowing on continually. He was more likely to be found, however, in the tap-room or the skittle-alley. It was Saturday evening, calm and placid, with a Sabbath stillness in the air, with only the continual thud and clatter of the skittles to break the spell of tranquility. Seated on benches round the players were the crews of the barges, looking on. One burly navigator had just come in, and was sitting on a bench in the grassy courtyard, his legs stretched out in luxurious ease. Money was chinking in his pocket, beer was in immediate prospect, the skittles rattled invitingly. A pretty girl—the daughter of the house—brought the man his mug of beer, and as he thrust his hand into his capacious pocket for some coin, she said in a tone of good-humoured admonition:

“Eh, Sam, mind you take care of your wages now, and carry them safe home to your wife.”

Sam forthwith emptied the contents of his pocket into his palm—a goodly handful of silver. Then he counted out carefully, eighteen shillings, and slid them back.

“There,” he cried, “them belongs to the missus,” and chinking the remaining coins joyously, “this t’other’s Sam’s.”

These bargees on the Trent are on the whole a very civil and well-conditioned class of men, greatly superior to those who ply exclusively on inland waters. It

seems as if the touch of salt water navigation they get in the mouth of the Humber gives them the character rather of sailors than of mere bargees. And this character of the Trent boatmen is probably very ancient. For in a presentment made in the fifteenth year of Richard the Second against Richard Byron, Armiger, and Joane his wife, for hindering the course of the waters of the Trent at Over Colwicke, which was the right of the said Joane, the Trent was there found to be one of the great rivers of the kingdom of England for passage of ships and batells—that is, boats—with victuals and other merchandise from the castle and town of Nottingham to the waters of Humber, and from thence into the deep sea.

The early importance of the navigation of the Trent as affording a watery highway to the Humber, and so on by the Ouse to the northern capital of the kingdom at York, explains the sudden rise to importance of Nottingham after the Conquest. Under the Anglo-Saxon kings the port was of little importance, but to the Conqueror it became one of the most important links in a chain of posts by which he retained his grasp upon York and the North. Thus he built a strong castle on the rock, which, although not actually on the river bank, yet commanded the approach thereto. And he made his own natural son, William Peveril, Earl of Nottingham, specially of the town and castle it seems, for the county, probably, was not considered of sufficient importance to have an Earl to itself. And in the same way, when the country became reconciled to the yoke of the Norman kings, the castle lost its importance as a fortification, and became merely a royal residence, and afterwards an appendage to more important Earldoms.

It now only remains to deal with a narrow region bordering on Derbyshire, the Nottinghamshire side of the valley of the river Erewash that here forms the boundary between the counties. Here everything is changed, and is still changing; a district of coal-mines and manufactures, in wealth or in want according to the fluctuations in the coal and iron trades, but on the whole thriving and pushing on. Many strange tales might be told of the vicissitudes of coal-seeking, for a good deal of the Nottingham coal-field has been recently brought into use—of men who had sunk all they had, and all that other people had, in vainly sinking and digging, and who at the last gasp came upon the

right vein, and were borne to wealth and honour; of others, who after toiling for years, and losing everything in the search for coal, broke down at the last moment, and saw all the results of success swept into the pockets of new comers.

In the midst of the smoke and smother lies Hucknall Torkard, with Byron's tomb in the church of what is now a busy thriving place. And beyond lie the woods of Annesley, where Mary Chaworth lived. Two small priories, Felley and Beauvale, lie near together, with a few broken walls to show that they once existed. And from this point two routes are open to the wanderer. On one hand he may penetrate the recesses of a wild, picturesque country, stretching almost without a break from Derbyshire peak to Scawfell; on the other opens out a region of coal and iron, with tall chimneys rising like the stakes that mark a river channel, in long succession, till the culminating point of the whole busy district is reached in Lancashire. But the hills we now see before us are the hills of Derbyshire, the bold and rocky vertebræ of England's backbone.

WIND-VOICES.

PILE high the logs, and draw the curtains round,
I will not heed—what matter that the wind
Howls round the house, and shakes the window-blind?

I know 'tis nothing save the wintry sound,
That speaks of autumn's death;
Beneath its angry breath
The leaves lie slain upon the trodden ground.

Suppose we cannot keep it out?—suppose
Those are real voices in that angry roar
That surges round the house? Suppose, once more,

The dead thus speak the words; the calm repose
Of just-relinquished life,
Of rest from just-fought strife,
Had silenced, and 'twas thus the dead arose?

Ghosts! ghosts! Oh, wailing wintry wind, be still!
Yet pity seizes me. I see again
Those whom I loved. Once more the anguished pain

Strikes to my soul, and tears mine eyelids fill.
Why should we shrink with fear,
E'en though the dead are near?
Ah me! how shrieks the wind—wild, wild and shrill!

Ghosts are abroad on the uncanny night,
I cannot shut them out, e'en if I would.
Perchance they have a message, dear and good,
Radiant, I pray, from Heaven's own crystal light.
Come in awhile to me,
Be as you used to be,
And make mine empty house-place filled and bright.

Oh, wild triumphant scream! There are no ghosts,
Save of the wicked, in the angry cries
That rend my heart, and fill my tired eyes.
Those whom I loved join not these vagrant hosts,
But lie too fast asleep,
In slumber dead and deep,
To walk abroad, screaming such empty boasts.

God! Silence me the storm, and let me rest,
Just where my loved ones sleep—out in the wind
That is so full of sorrow, deaf and blind.
They hear and see me not; in death's dark breast
A fearsome problem lies,
Nor earth, nor sea, nor skies,
Know as he knows, that He, not life, is rest.

LITTLE SISTERS.

WE are all more or less familiar with the quaint white caps and large black cloaks and hoods we see so often in the streets of London. North, south, east, and west, on foot, or enjoying the doubtful luxury of a ride in train or omnibus; wet or fine we see them everywhere, and in all weathers, and, to the credit of all English hearts be it said, we see them meet everywhere with the same respect from all sorts and conditions of men, from all creeds and religions. For the creed and religion of these be-cloaked and be-hooded ladies is simple, universal, and applies to all. It may be summed up in one word—charity. And, truth to tell, their charity ought indeed to cover a multitude of sins, for it comes to the rescue, and takes off our hands a great number of those whose theoretical claims are recognised by all, but whose actual claims are apt to weigh heavily upon us individually and socially as ratepayers.

The object of the "Little Sisters of the Poor" is to provide homes for the indigent aged and infirm of both sexes. The sisterhood was originally established at St. Servan in Brittany in 1840. Their records tell how M. L'Abbé Le Pailleur, the vicaire of that place, felt himself drawn to relieve the sufferings of the aged poor—sufferings at that time so terribly obvious in all Continental towns. He began his work with the assistance of two young women, enthusiasts like himself, and we read how the first recipient of their charity was an old dame of eighty, who was brought home to the garret occupied by the young sempstress and her friend, a girl of sixteen, also working for her living, and there nursed and fed upon their slender earnings. By degrees two more kind souls joined the good work, and aided in the maintenance of the poor inmates, now amounting to twelve in number. By this time, the garret was abandoned, and the ground-floor of a house taken as affording more accommodation. At this period, such of the old ladies and gentlemen as could get about, catered for their own wants, and

were not above continuing their daily rounds, and begging as of yore. But, alas for poor old human nature! perchance the certainty of a shelter at night for their old bones may have made them reckless of their souls, or perhaps the mantle of prophecy may have descended upon them, enabling them to foresee better days in store. And again, cyder is very cheap in Brittany. At any rate, it was finally agreed that, in spite of the disagreeableness of the process, it would be better for the old folks that their guardians should for the future solicit the aid they had so long begged for themselves. Accordingly they remained at home, while the Sisters, each armed with a basket, went forth to beg and receive the contributions hitherto bestowed upon their charges.

Now began the custom of soliciting scraps and broken food of all sorts, which helped largely to keep the wolf from the door. All the more needful this, now that the Bureau de Bienfaisances refused to allow the old people thus provided with shelter the little support they had previously given to some of them. It is almost startling to read of some of the unexpected succours which seem to have arrived at moments when most required by these courageous Little Sisters. The very novelty and nature of the work appealed to the people, and it was from the market-folks of the place that they received the first substantial contributions towards the tables of their charges. The first house they occupied wholly was purchased partly by the sale of a watch and some silver ornaments belonging to M. Le Pailleur, the rest was paid off in one year by voluntary contributions.

That the Sisters should come across minds unable to appreciate the nobility of their mission, can be quite understood. But the sight of these patient women, tending and caring for their fractious charges, effected what no eloquence could have done; and in time the ranks of the Little Sisters were swelled by some of the noblest ladies of France. From the garret in St. Servan there have sprung two hundred and twenty-four houses of the same description. The total number of aged poor now sheltered in the homes of the society is twenty-three thousand seven hundred. The total number of Sisters employed in their care is three thousand, and the total number who have died under their care is sixty-five thousand one hundred and sixty-five.

To any one who may be tempted to visit

the House of the Little Sisters of the Poor in Portobello Road, Notting Hill, we can only say that they will not be invited to inspect a building that could apparently be connected with the ignoble little garret of St. Servan; indeed, it would almost seem impossible that so handsome an erection should even be its faraway cousin. But the cheerful face of the Sister who opens the door shows that at any rate the courage and spirit of the founder have descended to her daughter, and her words of welcome sound hearty and sincere.

"Our dear children are very particular about their food," she says, laughing, "so perhaps you would like to see the kitchen first." It certainly is well worth a visit. A large, lofty room, faultlessly clean, with an enormous stove in the middle, laden, when we saw it, with huge pies for the Sisters' aged "children's" dinner. The arrangements are wonderfully good, and reflect great credit on the head of the department. The various bits and pieces brought in by the Sisters from their daily rounds, are sorted into large drawers and cupboards. In one are the broken crusts, only fit to be thrown into soup or made into puddings; in another, stale loaves and pieces large enough to serve at breakfast and tea. Soup, a favourite dish for old appetites and old teeth, is marvellously made out of scraps apparently quite unusable. Meat is carefully sorted when brought in, and pieces put aside for pies such as we saw, while daintier bits—perhaps here and there a portion of a fowl or so—are laid by for some "child" requiring particular attention, either for health's sake, or because he or she may need a little gentle coaxing; for "children" of eighty and ninety take a little humouring, and can on occasions be more than a little fractious.

Tea-leaves and coffee-grounds change their nature when brought under the dexterous hands of the Sisters and the influences of a gigantic boiler, and appear to satisfy even the fastidious taste of the old people.

The quantities of scraps, and their varied character, would appear incredible unless seen, but stranger still it is to compare the aspect of the disorderly mass when brought in with the same when, later on, it is presented at the tables of the poor inmates. The Sisters gratefully tell from how many houses they gather them; how, in spite of differences of creeds, their baskets are contributed to by rich and

poor, and how several of the principal hotels daily set aside large portions of broken food for them.

From the kitchens we proceeded to the dormitories—airy, spacious, and spotless—having comfortable-looking beds piled high with pillows. The bed-coverings alone tell a tale of the poverty and perseverance of their owners. Patch-work in all its branches must surely have been the sole occupation of the Little Sisters and their old charges if one might judge from the festive appearance of the beds. But the Sister laughingly denies the imputation, and triumphantly leads us to the huge laundry, where the work being done by the Sisters, aided by the least infirm of the old people, certainly goes far to confirm her statement.

The same characteristics—cleanliness, comfort, and cheerfulness—mark in like measure the wards belonging to the men and those belonging to the women.

In these we found such of the inmates as were too infirm to get about, or, in many cases, to leave their chairs, reading, writing, or even enjoying a game of cards. "You see," explained the Sister, "our house is their home, and we must make it as home-like as possible." Those able to do so were in the workshop turning old things into new. In the tailor's department we found that one master of his craft, a Frenchman, had turned an old overcoat, and as the original sleeves were worn out, had substituted others of a different material. "N'importe," he said, "j'ai une redingote nouveau." In the cobbler's and carpenter's shops we found the same process being repeated—old wood turned into useful articles for the general use, old shoes mended, new ones made, and well made, too, for these workmen are strictly of the old school, and have had ample time to acquire the mysteries of their craft. Considering that the most juvenile of these artists was over seventy-three, "orders" could hardly be expected to be executed with despatch. But they do their work as well as their feeble powers will allow, for no one here eats the bread of idleness if he or she can help it.

In the wards belonging to the women, the latter wore a no less busy appearance. Here we learned the mystery of the patch-work quilts, for this old lady is a past mistress of her art, and selects her colours with all the pride of an artist. Her neighbour presides over the vanities of her companions, and manufactures caps most

marvellously made and bedecked from the assortment of ribbons and pieces collected by the nuns. As for the gowns and other garments, which are re-created from old ones, it would take more time and space than we can afford to recount their intricacies and triumphant results. Those who are able to do so, assist in the various departments of housework, but judging from the decrepit appearance of even the most youthful, it seems to us as well that the Sisters should be young and strong.

In the infirmaries were the only painful scenes to be witnessed in this establishment. Old age, while it can get about by itself, pursue its little tastes, and take its little pleasures, is one thing; but here, in the sick-room, we see it in its most distressing form. Many are quite imbecile, more still blind, some utterly unable to move without help—requiring to be fed, washed, dressed, and tended like infants. It was truly a terrible sight, and it rendered still more beautiful the heroic devotion of these truly Christian ladies who have devoted their youth, their lives, and their all to this noble work.

During our tour of inspection the Sister amused us with many little traits of the character of their old charges, some of which we are bound to say redounded to the credit of the old ladies and gentlemen; but, at the same time, we must confess that many of the anecdotes were far from creditable to them, and we secretly felt that the conduct of many of the old people was distinctly reprehensible, and left much to be desired. But the good Sister's kind face of motherly pride as she told of how one old dame requires two or three nuns to hold her before she will condescend to be washed; how another will stop in bed when she ought to get up, and vice-versâ; how another old Irish lady considers that her guardians are tampering with her faith, and that she is taken to a Baptist meeting if she is asked to go to the tribune of the little chapel on days when she cannot be carried downstairs; forced us to hold our peace and, outwardly at least, to admire little peculiarities—much as one admires, to his fond mother, the spoilt child who rides round the drawing-room table on your new umbrella, or who remarks upon the growing scantiness of your hair before the assembled guests at the dinner-table.

As to the anecdotes relating to the foundation of the first houses they are endless. How their first name, "Servants of the Poor," came to be changed by the

poor themselves addressing them as "*Ma bonne sœur*," "*Ma petite sœur*," is easily to be understood. But it certainly is extraordinary in this nineteenth century to hear of three women, with twenty francs in hand, starting to a new town to establish a house for the support of others; and in three months' time finding themselves settled and surrounded by waifs and strays and doing well. Courage is a great quality; but to us, accustomed to consider ways and means, such an experience seems startling. This, however, is the way in which the house at Nantes was established. Of course the donations of rich benefactors helped largely in many cases; but in several instances the new foundations were launched almost without visible means; and in all the two hundred and twenty-four cases the houses have been successful. The one disappointment the sisters tell of is that at Geneva, where, in 1861, they established a house which was purchased with private means, and not merely rented, as in most cases.

For some reason the Geneva Government seem to have resented these ladies pursuing their avocation, peaceful though it seemed; and in 1875 they were requested to quit the territory.

"Did you not protest?" we asked.

"Oh yes!" replied the sister; "but it was of no use, we could not comply with their demands, so we quartered the old people upon as many of the French houses as possible, and came away. One of us," she continued, laughing, "did protest, and that loudly, for when the Sbirri came for our donkey, he fought valiantly, and had not his own old guardian come to the rescue, the day might have ended disastrously for the Republic of Geneva!"

It would be impossible, in the limits of this paper, to enter into the history of the growth of the home in the Portobello Road; it is now, in reality, a small colony, enclosed, it is true, within high walls, but within its precincts are to be found all that courage, animated by the highest principles, can command. At the farmyard, with its complement of cows, hens, and eight or ten pigs, we could only glance, but the Sister insisted upon our admiring the strong-looking horses employed in their well-known black van; and above all we were forced to admire "*Neddy*," though we could not be satisfactorily assured that he is a descendant of the valiant animal who fought so good a fight at Geneva.

The merit of this great work needs no

praise at our hands. It appeals to the hearts of all. Destitute old age finding an asylum when it does not know where to lay its head; helpless old age tended and cared for when forsaken and alone; penniless old age securely fenced in from the horrors of abject poverty—surely the institution speaks for itself, and we need not enlarge upon the subject. Of all the two hundred and twenty old people who find shelter in the home, there is not one who, if sent adrift to-morrow, would have a roof for shelter, or bread to eat. Candidates for admission are received into the home quite irrespectively of creed or nationality. The only requisites are that they should be over sixty, unable to earn a living, and have a good character. The Sisters do not importune for money; all they ask is that the rich should give from their superfluity—that Dives should give to Lazarus the crumbs that fall from his table. As to any return from their charges they do not look for that. All they ask from them is that they should show an appreciation of their efforts by living long to enjoy the comforts they procure at so much cost to themselves.

We should add that the old people themselves look with pity on any young things who join their circle under seventy or so.

At eighty they begin to think them fit to have a voice in general affairs. But at ninety this feeling is changed into a deeper veneration, and like Pip, in "*Great Expectations*," they are considered as reflecting great credit "upon them which brought them up by hand."

A SCIENTIFIC EXPERIMENT.

TOM WILKINSON had looked forward to the evening of the 17th of December with some amount of pleasure. He was to spend it at the house of his friend Jack Spencer of Guy's; not only that, but Spencer's aunt, who kept house for him, had been kind enough to ask Amy Durant, Tom's fiancée, to come as well. Tom had but few opportunities of meeting Amy, so he naturally was glad of this one, especially—but the reason why will soon be manifest.

However, for some reason or other, he did not greatly enjoy himself. Miss Spencer, having taken the somewhat bold step, for her, of inviting the lovers to her house, did not see fit to leave them alone for an instant.

Jack Spencer scarcely saw the fun of

having Tom up to spend an evening trying to be alone with Miss Durant; so, after an hour's insipid music, and more insipid conversation, he drew Tom out of the room on a very weak pretext, and dragged him off to his den.

"Look here, Tom, I've had enough of that cackle. Come and have a smoke."

"I don't care if I do; but I'm afraid Amy won't half like my leaving her."

"Quite a mistake, don't flatter yourself so grossly. Besides, you'll see plenty of her when you're married. She'll get on very well with my aunt now they're alone, and it strikes me you weren't getting on very brilliantly. Now what's your particular weakness—Scotch or Irish?"

"Irish, please."

"Ah, I thought so."

"Why?" asked Wilkinson; "I generally take Scotch."

"Yes, I know," replied Spencer, without volunteering any further information.

In a few minutes they had put on easy jackets, mixed their whisky-and-water, and settled down in easy-chairs.

"Now," said Spencer, "what will you smoke?"

"I've some rather good cigars," was Wilkinson's reply; "let me offer you one."

He put his hand in his pocket.

"Confound it!" he exclaimed; "I must have left my case in my great-coat."

"Never mind, old man, try this pipe, it's a beauty; got it from an American, whose leg I helped cut off for him at the hospital."

Wilkinson took it, thinking at the same time the recommendation was a strange one.

"What a jolly den you have!" he said, as he lit up.

"Not so bad. Don't let my aunt hear you call it a den, though; it's a study!"

Wilkinson laughed.

"By Jove, though, Tom, I do study now and no mistake. I'm one of the coming men, I can tell you. I'm going in for medicine on a new theory."

"And how about your practice whilst you are perfecting your theory?"

"Oh, my aunt will buy me a practice fast enough. Yes, my boy, I'm going to revolutionise medicine. No more doctoring up a man's body, that's a vast mistake."

"What are you going to do then?"

"Doctor up his mind."

Wilkinson smiled; he did not quite see what his friend was driving at. However,

he had considerable interest in science, and still more in Jack Spencer's progress, so he asked to be further enlightened.

There was nothing that Spencer wanted so much as an appreciative listener. He launched out under full sail.

"It's a perfect mystery to me, Tom, and to a few other men, why such marvellous phenomena as we hear of occasionally in the domain of electro-biology, as it's called, obtain so little scientific attention."

"There's such a lot of humbug connected with it," suggested Wilkinson.

"Of course there is, but it has a sound basis of fact. The science is in its infancy as yet, but it must grow. It is a known fact that one mind can influence another even at a distance, is it not?"

"I once saw a mesmerist, and certainly he seemed able to do anything, but I thought he was only a conjuror."

"Empirical generalisation, unworthy of you," remarked Spencer. "I won't quote cases, though I might do so for a week, but just look at those books, they are full of well-authenticated, scientifically-conducted experiments."

He took down from a shelf Darwin's *Zoonomia*, Macnish's *Philosophy of Sleep*, and several volumes of the *Revue Scientifique*.

"Now," continued Spencer, "it is proved that the mesmeriser can control the will, the actions, even the belief of his subjects; if he gives him a draught of water he can make him believe it is champagne; if he gives him an ink-bottle, he will smell it and think it a lovely rose."

"Have you seen these experiments?" asked Wilkinson.

"Seen them? Why, I've made them."

Wilkinson looked up astonished.

"Yes," said Spencer, "that's why I feel such an interest in this business. I possess the power of mesmerising to a considerable degree, and I cultivate it every chance I get. Have a little more whisky?"

"Thanks, I will."

"Of course you will," replied Spencer with a satisfied smile. "I decided that whilst we were talking. Influence of one mind over another, you see."

Wilkinson made a hasty exclamation. He was rather averse to being experimented on in this way.

"How is all this going to help you in doctoring?" he asked.

"Simply enough. Induce a state of trance; give your patient some water;

make him believe it is the medicine he requires, and it will have the same effect. Or if an operation is required, you can perform it during the trance, as he is quite insensible to pain."

"But can you always induce this trance?"

"That's a weak point, but in time we shall get over that. I can influence four people out of five. Miss Durant, for instance, would be a very good subject."

Wilkinson sat silently smoking for a few minutes. Apparently the mention of Amy's name had turned his thoughts into another channel.

He half wished he were back in the room where she was sitting. Then he thought of recent events, and determined that he would show that he could enjoy himself without her.

The two friends were soon in the midst of an animated discussion of their former subject. Spencer told of various curious experiments in which the operator had questioned his victim on all sorts of subjects, obtaining replies to everything, even when the question was one which he would not have wished to reply to if conscious.

This made Wilkinson remark that the possession of this mesmeric gift placed a vast power in the hands of the operator.

"Yes, it undoubtedly does. Fortunately, scientific men are the last in the world to take advantage of it for private ends."

Wilkinson looked at his friend.

"Did you ever try it from personal motives?"

Spencer looked as if he wished the question had not been asked.

"I don't mind telling you, Tom—I did once. You remember Nellie Fletcher?"

"Yes; I thought you liked her at one time."

"So I did, but I wanted to know if she liked me. I put her into a trance, with her consent, and made her an offer. She refused me."

"Didn't she remember anything about it afterwards?"

"Not an atom. The best of it is that the subject can't help answering absolutely truly, uninfluenced by etiquette or anything of that sort. You're a lucky fellow, Tom, to have been safe in proposing to Miss Durant without having to experiment first."

"Yes," was Tom's laconic reply.

"No doubt about her liking you."

"I hope not, as we are engaged."

"You're a lucky dog; she's a charming girl."

Wilkinson naturally assented, but did not feel altogether pleased when Spencer began praising Miss Durant somewhat enthusiastically.

He felt still less so when Spencer ended by saying:

"You don't know what a debt of gratitude you owe me, Tom. I could make her think you the meanest scamp on the earth, and I forbear."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean she is a splendid subject. I could easily gain complete control over her mind, and continue the influence in the waking state."

Wilkinson began to feel uncomfortable, and changed the subject abruptly.

"Did you have a good time at the Kestertons' dance, the other night?"

"Splendid," replied Spencer warmly. He was not so wrapped up in science that he was unable to enjoy the lighter pleasures. "I'm afraid you didn't, though; you looked as if you had the blues."

Tom could not say he had passed a pleasant evening. The truth was that Amy had, on that occasion, danced several times with Bartlett, a cousin, and a reputed old flame of hers. Tom was of a very jealous disposition, and had taken offence at it without explaining his reason. Consequently there had existed during the last few days a decided coolness between the lovers, and Tom had hoped that on the present evening he might have a chance of making matters smooth again.

However, Amy had not felt called upon to allude to her conduct, and he had not done so.

He wanted a confidant, and so he began to monopolise the talk; it was his turn. He told Jack the whole story, confessing his jealousy of Bartlett and asking his advice.

"My dear boy," said Spencer, "there's only one course open to you. You are making yourself miserable by this uncertainty; why not decide once for all whether Miss Durant cares for you, and you only?"

"How can I?"

"Easily enough. We will get her in here; I will mesmerise her, and whilst she is in the trance we will ask her if she cares two straws about Bartlett."

"It's all very well for you to talk in this easy way, you don't know what it is to be jealous."

"Don't I," exclaimed Spencer; "remember Nellie."

"But how can we get Amy here?" asked Wilkinson. "What possible excuse can we have for asking her?"

"We don't want one," replied Spencer confidently; "all we have to do is to will that she shall come."

"I don't believe it."

"Let's try," suggested Spencer. "We may fail, I acknowledge; we can but try."

After a moment's hesitation Wilkinson assented.

"Now," said Spencer, "concentrate your mind, and will strongly that she shall come."

Tom knitted his brows and willed. It would have been an amusing sight for any spectator. The two young men, with eyes fixed and hands firmly clenched, were bent forward in an attitude of intense suspense, doing apparently nothing.

"Are you willing?" asked Spencer after a time.

"Willing as Barkis," was the response.

"Keep it up."

They kept it up for some time without result. Then just as Wilkinson was about to resign, Spencer exclaimed:

"Hark!"

"I sha'n't be long," said a voice in the distance.

Then came the sound of a door being closed.

"By Jove, she's coming!" cried Spencer. "Quick, Tom, hide away those things."

The whisky-bottle and glasses were hastily smuggled into a corner, and the pipes shied into the fireplace.

Then came a gentle knock at the door, followed by a soft, "May I come in?"

Spencer opened the door.

"Excuse my interrupting," said Miss Durant, "but I thought you might want to smoke, so I brought Tom's cigar-case which fell out of his pocket on the sofa."

"A mere excuse, Tom," whispered Spencer.

Miss Durant turned to go, but Spencer detained her by saying:

"We were talking of you, Miss Durant, just as you came."

"Indeed?"

"Yes," said her lover; "Jack has been letting me into a few of the secrets of his profession. It seems he's a great mesmerist, and was saying that you were a capital subject."

"Am I? I've never been mesmerised in my life. What is it like?"

"The simplest thing in the world," said Spencer. "You only drop off into a kind of dream."

"And then the mesmerist makes you do what he likes," added Tom.

"How curious! I should like to try it," said Amy.

"I'll mesmerise you with pleasure if you like," said Spencer.

"You will be bound to answer all his questions truthfully," said Tom warningly.

Amy looked up rather annoyed.

"One would imagine you were of opinion that truthfulness was not one of my usual characteristics," she said. "I'm not afraid of the test."

"Shall I go on?" whispered Spencer to Tom.

"Yes," said Tom desperately; "fire away."

Amy was quite ready. Following Spencer's directions she seated herself in a chair and fixed her eyes steadily on a small disc, which he placed on the wall.

"You'll be sure and wake me afterwards?" she said.

"Oh yes, that's a matter of no difficulty."

Amy settled down to the operation with the remark that it was like being photographed.

Wilkinson stood behind her, anxiously watching the progress of the experiment, whilst Spencer began making slow passes.

"When you feel drowsy let your eyes close," he said quietly.

In a very short time Amy seemed to be feeling the influence of the operator, her eyes closed, and she appeared to be fast asleep.

"Is she off?" whispered Tom.

"I think so, but we will leave her a few moments and make quite sure."

"Can she hear what we say?"

"Oh no."

"I'm half ashamed about it," said Tom; "upon my word I don't think she really cares about Bartlett."

"Wait a few minutes and you will know for certain."

After a few moments more and a powerful pass or two, Spencer gently opened her eyes, which were quite fixed.

"There she is, you see," he said to Tom.

"Are you certain she's off?"

For reply Spencer gave her ear a pinch.

"You see she is absolutely unconscious," he said; "you might cut off her arm and

she would not feel it. What shall I ask her?"

"Ask her about the ball," suggested Tom.

"Very well; I'll make her believe she is at the Kestertons' dance. Miss Durant!"

"Yes," replied Amy dreamily.

"Can you hear what I say?"

"Yes."

"Do you know who I am?"

"No."

"You ought to know my voice," said Spencer; "I'm Tom Wilkinson."

"I say, Jack——" interrupted Tom.

"Shut up! Have you enjoyed the evening?"

"Very much," was the eager reply.

"Have you danced with Mr. Bartlett to-night?"

"Yes, several times, and I'm engaged to him for another waltz."

"Ah, I see him coming," said Spencer; "I must resign you, I suppose."

"Now," he whispered to Tom, "quick, here's your chance; I'll make her believe you're Bartlett."

Tom came forward.

"Can I speak in my natural voice?" he asked.

"Yes; but try and talk intelligently, like Bartlett."

But Tom could only make a few vapid observations, till Spencer told him to begin dancing, as he was making Amy believe the waltz had begun. Tom put his arm round her waist and slowly moved her round the room.

"I haven't often had this pleasure to-night," he said, speaking in his character of Bartlett.

"Oh, how can you say so, Mr. Bartlett; this is the third waltz you've had."

Tom looked daggers at Spencer, who encouraged him by a look to go on.

"Aren't you afraid Mr. Wilkinson will be jealous?"

"Oh, let him be if he likes," said Amy; "don't let us talk about him; let's talk about something pleasant."

"You dare to——" burst out Tom; but Spencer put his hand over his mouth and dragged him away.

"You had better leave it to me, if you can't control yourself," he said. "I must make her believe that I am Bartlett."

"You had better take care what you are doing," muttered Tom angrily.

"We must carry it through now we've started," said Spencer.

He led Amy to her chair, and willing that she should believe the dance ended, let her sit down.

"My dear Miss Durant," he said to her, "how it pains me to see you engaged to such an unappreciative man as Wilkinson."

"You villain!" cried Tom; "are you going to try and prejudice her against me before my face?"

"Will you be quiet? I'm Bartlett now, not Spencer."

"He is not a model lover, I acknowledge," said Amy.

"Ah, if I only had the happiness of showing you how I could appreciate you," said Spencer.

"But you, Mr. Bartlett, are not the only one who does."

The two friends exchanged glances. What was coming out next?

"Go on," said Tom resolutely.

"Who else is there?" asked Spencer.

"Do you like him very much?"

"Yes, but don't tell Tom."

"No, I won't. Who is it?"

"It's Jack Spencer."

"Jack Spencer!" he exclaimed. "I!"

"You! No; you are Mr. Bartlett."

"Yes, yes, of course I am," said Spencer. He turned to Tom. "I think we had better stop now," he said.

"Go on," replied Tom; "I insist. Ask her if she has danced with you to-night."

Spencer obeyed.

"Only twice," was the sorrowful reply.

"Tom," said Spencer, "it's all a delusion—a mistake. I only danced with her once all the evening."

"Don't attempt to deny it," cried Tom. "You yourself told me she must speak the truth."

"But she isn't——"

"Go on!—Wait a moment; make her believe that I am you. No nonsense, now."

Tom looked threatening. Spencer obeyed, wondering what would be the result.

Wilkinson at once began. Evidently his mind was made up.

"Mr. Bartlett's a nice fellow—isn't he, Amy?"

"Yes, but not so nice as you, Mr. Spencer."

"Tom," said Spencer, "she doesn't mean it."

"Silence!" was Tom's reply.

He continued to talk in his assumed character of Spencer, the real owner of the name standing by helpless.

"I've not seen you much lately," said Tom.

"No; Tom is so jealous. I say, Jack, do you remember that lovely walk by moonlight last week?"

Spencer could not stand this.

"Tom, on my honour," he said, "I was out of town the whole of last week."

"So you say," was the contemptuous reply.

"You told me then you liked me," continued Amy.

"Tom," interrupted Spencer, "if I never speak another word——"

"You won't if you don't keep silent now," was the savage retort. "Why, Amy, so I do," he said to her.

"Then won't you kiss me, Jack, as you did then?"

Tom left her with a bound, and seized Spencer by the collar.

"You abominable villain!" he cried.

"Let me go!" shouted Spencer, "or I'll smash this bottle on your head!"

Wilkinson gradually relinquished his hold.

"What have you to say for yourself?" he asked. "Are you satisfied with your scientific experiment?"

"Tom," said Spencer earnestly, "no one could be more surprised at the way things have turned out than I am; it is contrary to every scientific law—I can't explain it."

"But you shall explain it; we are no longer friends—we are rivals."

"I deny it," cried Spencer; "I deny that I aspire to the affections of Miss Durant. There is some incomprehensible mystery about this; let us ask Miss Durant herself to explain it."

"Yes, we will; undo your miserable spells."

Spencer proceeded to go through the usual process by which mesmerised persons are restored to their normal condition. For some reason it had not its usual effect. Amy still remained unconscious.

In spite of Spencer's efforts to conceal his anxiety, Tom soon discovered that all was not going properly. When some minutes had elapsed, and no sign of returning consciousness appeared, it would have been hard to say which was the more alarmed.

"Shout in her ear," suggested Tom.

It was tried without effect. "Willing" seemed to have lost its power. "Amy, Amy!" was cried in vain by the frightened lover, who would have been ready to

murder the operator on the spot, but for the knowledge that if he couldn't wake her, no one could.

"Try some water," suggested Spencer; "throw it in her face."

Tom seized the bottle, and was on the point of deluging her when her eyes gradually opened.

"Where am I?" she asked dreamily.

"In my room," replied Spencer reassuringly; "don't be frightened."

"I remember now, you were going to mesmerise me. Did you?"

"He did," answered Wilkinson, "and no mistake."

"I've been having such funny dreams," said Amy; "I thought I was at the Kestertons' again."

Wilkinson whispered to Spencer:

"I thought you told me they never remembered what had happened?"

Spencer could only look puzzled.

By this time Amy was completely recovered, and Tom thought it best to get over the necessary scene as soon as possible.

"Miss Durant," he said, "I am sorry I must ask you a few questions, rendered necessary by what you said during your trance. Did you dance with either Mr. Bartlett or Mr. Spencer at the Kestertons'?"

"Of course—you saw me; why do you ask such a question?"

"Did you meet this man by moonlight one evening last week?" asked Tom, fixing his eyes on her.

Amy drew herself up.

"I refuse to answer," she said.

"I have asked Spencer," went on Tom; "he denies it, but I believe falsely. I ask you for the last time."

"I will not lower myself by replying to such a question," returned Amy, moving towards the door.

"Ah, you cannot deny it!" burst out Tom. "Oh, Amy, you have basely deceived me, you have confessed unconsciously in your sleep that you don't care for me, but that others own what you call your heart. Now I know the truth, and I resign you and happiness for ever."

"Very well," replied Amy calmly, "if you choose to act so stupidly without cause, you may do so."

"Without cause!" ejaculated Tom sarcastically.

"Without cause," repeated Amy. "Can you listen to reason for a moment? though you don't deserve to have it wasted on you."

When Mr. Spencer thought he had mesmerised me I had simply shut my eyes to induce the trance. I therefore heard your conversation, and gathered that I was to be made the subject of an experiment to gratify your jealousy. I need not say I carefully acted as if I were in a real trance and did my best to pay you both out for your unwarrantable proceedings. I hope I frightened you well. Now, gentlemen, are you not ashamed of yourselves?"

Spencer was the first to reply:

"Miss Durant, I have been a most uncompromising scoundrel; there is my arm, kindly return the pinch I gave you with tenfold interest."

Tom stood silent, it was not so easy for him to speak. At last he decided to throw himself upon her mercy.

"Amy, what can I say in extenuation of my conduct?"

"That, sir, is for you to discover; it is not my part to find excuses for you."

"I have none," said Tom humbly. "Will you forgive me?"

"Perhaps—conditionally."

"Any conditions you like," said Tom earnestly.

"The first is you are never to be jealous again."

"Never," cried Tom. "What else?"

"That you are to forgive me if I have given you cause for jealousy," whispered Amy. "I won't do so again."

"Why, my darling, you are turning the tables on me."

"Perhaps, after all," she said softly, "table-turning is better than mesmerism."

JENIFER.

BY ANNIE THOMAS (MRS. PENDER-CUDLIP).

CHAPTER XXXIII. IN TERROR.

As she had consented to give it at all, Jenifer was determined on exerting herself to the utmost to make her little dinner-party go off well. She knew that Effie would be critical about the appointments and adornments of the table, and so she supplied deficiencies in the silver and glass department by an abundance of tasteful floral decorations, at which she fondly fancied Mrs. Hugh Ray would be unable either to carp or sneer.

Hubert and Effie were the first to arrive. They had been down in the country cub-hunting, and had dressed at an hotel on arriving in town instead of going to Mrs. Jervoise's house, and, for once in her life,

Effie wished to be early. She had a word or two to say to Jenifer.

"Good of Flora, isn't it, to make this effort for you?" she began as she met Jenifer. "Nothing else would have got her out to a little dinner of this kind. But she really means to make something of you, Jenifer, though you have disappointed us all so dreadfully."

"What's she going to make of me?" Jenifer asked laughingly.

"Why, she's coming to-night to make Whittler take you in hand in earnest; he'll do anything for Flora, he admires her so immensely. Poor Flora would much rather be at home, as she can't go to places where she can really amuse herself just yet, but she is always ready to be good-natured, and as you've failed in one thing, she wants to start you in another."

"I'm much obliged to her, but I don't think I'm ready to be started with Mr. Whittler," Jenifer said.

"It will be horrid if you don't do something to help yourself, when others are so ready to help you, Jenifer. Captain Edgecumb has been idiotic enough to 'cast himself adrift,' as Hugh says, and as you would marry him, you'll have either to starve with him, or to make an effort to keep him. Mr. Whittler will give you an engagement, if Flora asks him; and Flora's so good-natured that she'll ask him in a minute, if you ask her to do it."

"I don't think I shall trouble her, Effie. Come down and see mother; you haven't seen her since I came home."

"No, I'd rather stay here till Flora comes," Effie said calmly, seating herself before the dressing-room fire; "there's only Hugh and Captain Edgecumb down there, and it will be dimly dull till Flora comes. Just watch Mr. Whittler to-night with Flora; I'm sure he means to propose to her, and it would be hateful if she married him. But she won't marry him, you'll see; she'll refuse the man that all the other women want."

There was stir in hall, and staircase, and passage just then, and presently Mrs. Jervoise, wrapped from head to foot in a black plush dolman mantle, enriched with sable trimmings, swept into the room.

"I'm so cold," she cried, giving Jenifer a hurried hand-clasp as she passed. "What a climate it is this side of the Park; how can you live here? It's arctic! Effie, you selfish child, I won't let you go out hunting again while you're staying with me. I've

had the deadliest day; nothing to relieve its monotony but Whittler."

"Anyway, you've had the society of the man everyone is craving for," Effie said obligingly.

"Oh, that of course; but, as far as I'm concerned, 'everyone' is welcome to him; only he happens to be fastidious, and 'everyone' doesn't please him. How well you're looking, Mrs. Edgecumb. I expected to find you thin and pale, after that horrid affair at the concert the other night."

"I've gone through heavier troubles than that without getting thin or pale," Jenifer replied. And then Mrs. Jervoise (still wrapped up in her plush and sables, which she declared she must keep on during dinner in these arctic regions), said she was ready, and they all went down.

"If Jenifer's only sensible, Captain Edgecumb, Flora will make Mr. Whittler come to a decided agreement with her to-night," Effie said to Captain Edgecumb, as he took her in to dinner, for it was tacitly understood that her elder sister, the widow, should be left to the care of Mr. Josiah H. Whittler.

"I'll arrange with Whittler about it; I see it will be better for me to take all business matters into my own hands," Captain Edgecumb replied with a pompous assumption of being absolute ruler over his wife, that made Effie congratulate herself on having evaded the position.

"Do you think she can act?" she asked. "It will be a pity for her to come before the public a second time in another way and fail, won't it?"

"Very mortifying to me if she does; but she'll be farmed better this time; mistakes were made all round before, I feel sure of that. Old Voglio wasn't the right teacher for her——"

"Flora thought she was, and Flora never makes mistakes," Effie interrupted sharply. "How do you like having Mrs. Ray to live with you? I found her a bore at Moor Royal."

"And I find her one here," Captain Edgecumb admitted frankly. "The neck of it will be broken when Jenifer and I go to America. I shall instal the old lady in a small house in one of the suburbs, and when we come back I shall take one for ourselves in a better part of town."

"And we shall go back to Moor Royal in a few months, I suppose. After all, it has been a good thing not living there for a time. I mean we must have spent more there than we have while we've been with

Flora. The worst of going back will be the having Mrs. Jack under our noses; but I shall cut them dead from the first."

"Quite right, too; I shall make Jenifer do the same," Jenifer's loving lord assented.

And then Effie went on to remark how much she disliked seeing an odd number at dinner-table.

"Neither Flora nor I ever have it, it makes everything crooked. I wonder Jenifer didn't get someone to balance her mother, don't you?"

"Yes," he said; "but Jenifer cares nothing at all for the look of things. I want her to go to my mother for advice and suggestions. You remember how perfectly my mother's house was managed? But Jenifer prefers her own rather rough-and-ready style."

Meanwhile in the intervals of devoting himself to the rich widow, Mr. Whittler was employed in drawing out Jenifer's views and ideas about the stage.

"The dramatic stage is nearly a sealed book to me. My experience of play-going has been very limited," Jenifer said when he pressed her to accord it a higher place than the lyric stage.

"But of the two which do you conceive to have the higher aim, and the better opportunities of setting forth realistically ennobling scenes and characters, and thrilling, tender incidents?"

"The dramatic; I suppose I must concede that," she agreed.

"Exactly so. And in face, form, mind, and manner you are fitted to create the noblest characters that have ever been put upon the stage, or that can be written for it. I see a great future for you if you'll only give yourself fair play, and allow yourself to be put in the right road for it."

"Even you will fail to persuade me that I have a vocation for the stage," she said, and then, more with the design of turning the conversation from a topic that was distasteful to her than with any idea of interesting him, she began speaking to her brother Hubert about Admiral Tullamore's marriage.

"He's your godfather, or something, isn't he? Married, by Jove! That means that you're cut out of his will, Jenny."

"I never took it for granted that I was in it, or thought about his property at all, in fact. But when I tell you who it is he has married, you'll be staggered."

"An impecunious Irish peer's daughter probably?"

"Not at all; someone much less likely. You'll never guess."

"Don't mean to try," Hubert said scornfully.

"But you'll not be able to help being surprised when I tell you it's Mrs. Hatton, the lady we lodged with when mother and I came to London."

"Do you mean the funny little stout woman who took me for her hostess at Belle Campbell's party, and began being affable and gushing?" Effie cried out.

And this brought general attention to bear upon the theme, and aroused Mr. Whittler's indolently-expressed but vital interest.

"Did you say the lady who has just married was the same one I had the misfortune to miss being introduced to at Mrs. Campbell's At Home, through the unfortunate circumstance of her sudden indisposition?" Mr. Whittler asked suavely.

"Jenifer didn't say all that, or anything like it," Effie laughed; "but she meant the same lady. Who is it she has married, Jenifer—anybody nice? I hope not."

"Your uncharitable spirit will be disappointed then, Effie. Admiral Tullamore is a dear old man—isn't he, Hubert?—a thorough gentleman, and as good and honourable as gold."

"He has made a confounded ass of himself in marrying that intriguing little woman," Captain Edgecumb put in wrathfully. "When we were staying at Kildene the other day, I saw through Mrs. Hatton's game, and could have upset it easily enough if Jenifer had helped me; but she wouldn't be guided by me, and this is the end of it."

"Does the gentleman who has been fortunate enough to secure so charming a lady reside in London?" Mr. Whittler asked.

"No, in Ireland; in one of the loveliest parts of County Kerry. Kildene is the name of his place, and it's one of the prettiest and best-kept estates, or demesnes as they call them, in the south of Ireland," Jenifer explained. "We are all very fond of Admiral Tullamore, you must understand, Mr. Whittler. He was one of my father's oldest and dearest friends, wasn't he, mother dear? If Mrs. Hatton makes him happy, I shall be very fond of her too."

"Kildene, County Kerry." Mr. Whittler repeated these words to himself till they were thoroughly impressed upon his memory. Then he gave himself up to the work in hand, and made himself more agreeable to Mrs. Jervoise than he had ever done before.

That evening, without consulting Jenifer, Captain Edgecumb made a formal agreement with the American actor to the following purpose. Mrs. Edgecumb was to begin studying under the direction of Mr. Whittler with as little delay as possible, and on the return of the latter to New York, she was to accompany him on a paid engagement.

"She's got beauty, and she's got talent, and she'll soon draw her hundred a week in New York," Mr. Whittler prophesied.

"The sooner the better," Captain Edgecumb said.

Then he went on to ask when the lessons were to commence.

"In about a week. I'm leaving town for a few days in the country."

"Ah! shooting, I suppose?"

"And hunting," Mr. Whittler said dryly; but he did not go on to explain to the English gentleman that his quarry was a woman.

"What part of the country?"

"The North Yorkshire," Whittler said dauntlessly.

But that night after he got back to his hotel, he wrote to Mrs. Tullamore, Kildene, County Kerry, Ireland, and bade her prepare herself and her husband to entertain her old friend, Josiah H. Whittler, for a few days.

"It's a long time since I've thrown my leg over an Irish hunter, or had a day's shooting," he wrote. "You will take care, I am sure, that I have a fair taste of these pleasures while I am your honoured guest."

The woman who received this letter had been Admiral Tullamore's wife only a few days when it was put into her hands. Fortunately for her, it was given to her as she sat at breakfast by herself, for the admiral, old as he was, kept earlier hours than the comparatively young woman whom he had married.

The sight of the handwriting made her shudder, but with the self-control that comes from the instinct of self-preservation, she laid it down quietly until the servant went out of the room.

Then she opened and read the letter, and the pallid look left her face, and in its place burned the fire of indignation. Could he come? If he were other than he pretended to be to the world; if he were what she almost knew and altogether feared he was, could he come? Was it in man to be so callous, so demoniacal, so devoid of every

quality that lifts man up above the beasts that perish?

Woe for her! She knew that he had it in him to debase himself, and degrade her, to any extent. She knew that to give himself one hour's pleasure he would see her physically and morally flayed. And now she had involved another in the ruin which he could bring upon her if he so minded. She had put the poor old admiral's honoured head under the heel that could and would crush it without compunction. And she did not dare to lie down and die under the miserable conviction, as she longed to do. She had to get up and live through it, and put all her shaken strength into the work of trying to avert the inevitable.

She took refuge in that temporary sanctuary to which so many women flee—a bad headache, when her husband came in, and questioned her with kindly curiosity about her altered looks. And then another problem forced itself to the front, and compelled her to solve it. How was she to give him her news? How was she to introduce the name of the self-invited visitor? How was she to explain to her husband that she wanted a man, an old friend, to come and be her guest before she had been a wife a week?

If only she had kept Ann with her, it would have been easier. Ann could have hinted that poor mistress was upset by reason of having heard from the friend who had seen poor master dead and buried, and delicacy would have forbade any questioning on the admiral's part. But no! even Ann would have failed at this ghastly pinch, for Ann would do anything in the world for her—except lie.

She started up like a hunted thing, as she was, when after a couple of hours' ineffectual consideration and revolving of the subject in her mind, she remembered suddenly that he might be here at any moment!—might follow his letter closely!

How should she meet him? How could she meet him? How could she live through the sight of his presence tainting the atmosphere of this house which had always been good and honoured? Rather than do it, she would confess it all to Admiral Tullamore, and be turned out as the traitress she was.

Even while she was making and breaking her mad resolutions momentarily, they came and told her that the gentleman, whose card was handed to her at the same

time, was come, and "what instructions would she be pleased to give as to where the gentleman would be placed?"

She looked at the card! It bore the dreaded name of Josiah H. Whittler.

The crisis had come, and suddenly she felt calmer than she had been since the receipt of his letter in the morning. Taking that letter now in her hand, almost forgetful of its contents, she went to the admiral, who was following the fortunes of some of his old friends in the Navy List. And as soon as she found herself in his presence her purpose failed her. She could not bring herself to mar the perfect trust and love he had in her. Love and trust which revealed themselves so plainly as she approached him, that the tears sprang to her eyes.

"I was coming to tell you that a friend of my late husband's"—the words almost choked her—"has arrived here to see me. He is the same who brought me the news of Mr. Hatton's death. You will forgive the liberty, won't you, dear, when I tell you that he is an American, and a famous actor?"

"There's no liberty to forgive," the old admiral cried, standing up with the alacrity of a boy. "Your own friends surely are welcome in your own house. I've a great regard for many Americans. I made a good sterling friend among them in 1814." Then he took out his Victoria medal for "The Potomac, August 17th, 1814," and showed it to her with pride, and was proceeding to prose on about the cutting-out boat expedition in which he had won that special laurel, when a message was brought to Mrs. Tullamore.

"The gentleman wants to know if you mean to see him or not, ma'am," the servant said hesitatingly. And Admiral Tullamore said emphatically:

"That's not the message of an American gentleman!"

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and told him of her discovery of this far-off cousin, and of her pathetic history, putting it as pathetically as she could, with a deep design. For, will it be believed, that this active-minded little woman was match-making! A marriage between Archie and Ida would reconcile everything and everyone, and her own distracted conscience to boot. Being desirable it seemed probable, and Mrs. John set about to sow the first seeds of love in the hearts of these children in the hope that though the seed might remain latent, or even be overgrown for a time, it might yet one day spring up when opportunity favoured it. Therefore she appealed to Archie's pity and patronage on Ida's behalf. She knew the boy by heart, and felt that dependence was the best passport to his favour. It flattered at once his strength and his weakness, which had been the strength and weakness of his poor father — generosity. Archie, therefore, was duly prepared to pity, protect, and patronise Ida, though, as he said with much loftiness to his mother, "Little girls were not much in his line." Little girls indeed!

Then Mrs. John hurried up to Ida, severely blaming herself for leaving her all this time in the cold bedroom. But no apology was necessary, for the child had not even taken her hat off. She was standing at the window, which commanded a view of the churchyard, lost to everything but her loss.

"My dear child, you haven't even taken your things off. I don't believe you've stirred foot or finger since I left you. And tea coming in!"

"I'm so sorry, Mrs. Pybus; but I sha'n't be a minute now."

"Indeed, dear, I shall not trust you. You're just like Mr. Pybus. He'd go to bed in a chimney-pot hat, if I didn't remonstrate with him against the extravagance of the habit."

This picture of the Rev. John's habitual extravagance made Ida smile. Such a smile! It changed her whole face in a moment, making it altogether lovely. Meanwhile Mrs. John was busy taking her things off, scolding her the while, as if she was a little child, resolute to exorcise this demon of gloom which seemed to have possessed her for years.

"Now you may go and wash your face and hands. No, I shall not leave you, we will go down together. There, that's better. Now for your hair. My dear child, what a quantity of hair! You

should have a wool-combing machine for it. Did you never wear it down your back?"

"Not since I was a child, Mrs. Pybus," Ida replied, without the least consciousness of absurdity.

"Oh, not since you were a child. I didn't know you'd ever been a child. But, Ida, I mean to make a child of you while you're with me. Mind that, my dear. I think I shall put you in pinafores and short frocks, with bare arms and legs, and let you go shares in my pocket-handkerchief."

Ida again smiled as she stood opposite the glass, while Mrs. John was deftly doing her hair.

"There, you're like Alice in Wonderland, you're getting smaller already. How long is it since you saw that bright face in the glass? Not since you were a child? There's the tea-bell. Come."

But Ida's heart failed her at the thought of facing strangers.

"I think, Mrs. Pybus, if you wouldn't mind, I—I'd rather not go down this evening."

"Nonsense, my dear. There's only Mr. Pybus, who never sees any one, unless you screw him up to it like an opera-glass, and Archie, your cousin, who is only a child. Besides, it's only for a few minutes, we shall send them both away when they've had their tea."

It will be seen that Mrs. John, for all her good resolutions, could not help speaking to Ida as though she were out of her teens, instead of just into them.

Ida was relieved to find no one in the breakfast-room when they entered. The Rev. John was always late, and generally needed to be summoned two or three times to each meal; while Archie had shot off in a frenzy of excitement upon a report from Tom Chown that the weasel, which had desolated his rabbit-hutch, was trapped at last. The maid was sent to knock up the Rev. John, who came in thereon with unusual promptitude, and with an air of resolution, and marched up to Ida as to the imminent deadly breach.

"How do you do, Miss Tuck? I'm glad to see you. I hope your father is quite well."

And then, after a look that cried "plaudite" to Mrs. John, he sat down, relieved, to his tea. Ida, tongue-tied as usual, said nothing, but that, of course, he didn't notice. Nor would he have noticed it if her answer had been the correct

equivalent of his question, "He is quite dead, thank you."

Before Ida had quite recovered from her confusion, Archie burst into the room like a shell, forgetting "the little girl's" existence in his excitement.

"Mother, we've got him! Such a——"

Here, encountering Ida's solemn, star-like eyes, he recollected himself and her, and collapsed.

"I hope he'll keep, Archie, for the tea won't. There, shut the door, gently if you can, and sit down. This is your cousin Archie, Ida."

Ida rose up timidly, as at a formal introduction, and held out her hand shyly, which Archie, with greater shyness, shook in silence. For the rest of the meal Mrs. John had to do all the talking, as the other three were as cheerful and sociable as hens under an arch on a wet day.

Ida's first impression of Archie was simply that he was a very boyish boy. But Archie's first impression of Ida was more positively unflattering. She was not a "little girl" by any means, nor patronisable, nor sociable, nor even approachable, and she wouldn't care for rabbits. In this last discreditable defect of hers there was some consolation, for he needn't now offer her his black and white lop-eared doe, which he had been moved mentally to vow to her on hearing from his mother of her troubles. Still, the boy was not easy in his mind about the matter. He would have been glad to please his mother and himself by doing Ida kindnesses if she would have allowed him, but she seemed beyond their reach altogether. However, next morning he thought he saw his chance.

It was Sunday morning, and on Sunday mornings, from time immemorial, all the church-bells in that district were rung at eight o'clock. Now Archie, of late, had taken enthusiastically to bell-ringing, and was allowed to practise his 'prentice-hand only at this eight o'clock réveillé. Therefore he was early at the churchyard gates, to find Ida there before him. She had expected that they would have been open.

"I'll get the keys," he said in a shy subdued voice, and shot off to the sexton's. Returning immediately, he opened the gate, and was rewarded with a tremulous "Thank you," and a look which made him long to do something worth thanks for her.

While she made for her mother's grave, Archie opened the church, and climbed up to the tower, and looked out from one of its loophole windows on Ida standing stupefied by the new-made grave. It was in a horrible condition—a foul heap of shiny yellow clay, sunk down on one side, and it looked more horrible by contrast with the neatly-kept graves around. In fact, the natural soil of the graveyard was brick-clay, in which nothing would grow, but in five years Mrs. John had made the wilderness blossom as the rose. She was even more anxious to have the churchyard beautified than the church, and she so worked upon the feelings of the people that there was a competition amongst most of them as to the gardening of these graves. Each brought barrows of soil for the grave of his own dead, and sowed, and planted, and kept it weeded throughout the year. So it was that poor Mrs. Luard, who had never seen so lovely a churchyard, begged Ida to have her buried here. But poor Mrs. Luard's own grave, as we say, was in a horrible state, and was specially revolting to Ida with her notion that her mother had lost neither her knowledge of nor her pleasure in what had been dear to her here.

The child was so distressed at the state of the grave that Archie saw her hurry to meet the sexton, as he came in to give the boy his lesson in bell-ringing, and say something to him, pointing to the grave.

"What did she say to you, Blogg?"

"Yon lass? Shoo axed me what Aw'd fettle* yon grave for. But shoo mun sam it up† for hersen. Aw'm noan bahn to hev' nobbody's lavins."

That is to say, he must have all the graves or none in his charge. The Rev. John's permission to the parishioners to have access at all times to the churchyard, and to attend to their own graves, instead of paying Blogg to neglect them, was an exceedingly sore point with the surly sexton. So he poured vitriol into Ida's bleeding heart. Archie, too indignant with Blogg to take his lesson, and anxious to relieve Ida's mind on this point, hurried down the steep tower stairs and out into the churchyard. But Ida had gone back to the vicarage, and when Archie found her there in the breakfast-room, gazing into the fire with a look of wretchedness in her

* "Fettle"—i.e. put in order. † "Sam it up"—i.e. heap it up.

wan face, he lost courage and stole out of the room again.

But next morning, at the dawn, that is, at six-thirty—he had to go to Leeds to school at nine o'clock—he and Tom Chown were working at the grave like navvies, first levelling the unsightly yellow sludge, then covering it deep with barrow upon barrowful of soil from the vicarage garden, and then banking it up with sods from the common.

"I tell you what, Tom," said Archie, as he straightened himself to rest, with a rake in his hand, and with his head critically on one side to admire his work; "I tell you what, Tom, I shall make it the nicest grave in the churchyard. I shall plant my white moss-rose there," making a hole with the rake at the head of the grave, "and I shall have a cross of violets, like that on Mrs. Parry's grave, only prettier, down the centre, and I shall—put—at the sides——" hesitatingly. "I must get mother to find out what flowers she likes best. If——"

Here he felt a timid and tremulous hand on his arm, and looking round found behind him Ida, with "a face like a benediction," all her full heart shining through her eyes. She had seen them at work from her window, and had hurried out in time to overhear Archie's plan for making the grave the prettiest in the churchyard. Tom Chown shuffled off shamefaced with an empty barrow, not quite sure that it wasn't a scrape, as almost every enterprise Archie inveigled him into was. Archie also was shy and shamefaced. In truth, he was thinking less of Ida's gratification than of his own credit, when he boasted that he would make the grave the prettiest in the graveyard, for everything he took in hand was to be a masterpiece, and might have been, perhaps, if he hadn't tired of it as heartily as he undertook it before it had risen above ground. Therefore, Ida's thanks, expressed on her face, seemed out of all proportion to his service, and as he couldn't bear being overpaid, he was ill at ease, and shamefaced, and cast about for means to balance the account. Ida, with, for her, extraordinary demonstrativeness, let her hand slip down his arm to take his, which she held and pressed, saying only, "I saw you from the window. I wanted to thank you," when she stopped, overcome.

"That brute, Blogg, the sexton, you know, that you asked to do it, he's an old beast! It wasn't a bit of trouble. I

say, I wish you liked rabbits. Do come and look at them. There's a black and white one, such a beauty; I wish you'd have it—will you? Do!"

Ida misunderstood this sudden change of subject to be meant as a diversion of her grief and of her gratitude, and was surprised and more moved than ever by the thoughtful kindness of Archie, whom, of course, she regarded as years younger than herself. And, as her heart in her sorrow was even like melting wax, the boy's considerate generosity made a lifelong impression upon it.

"I should like to see them very much," she said. So they returned together to the house, Archie dilating upon the ravages, the size, and the fate of the weasel, and Ida distressed with the thought, "Beggar that I am, I am even poor in thanks." She could say only, "No, thank you, I wouldn't know what to do with it," when Archie offered in succession a rabbit, a pair of pigeons, a pen-knife, and a catapult. At last, seeing that with Archie the most acceptable way to acknowledge an obligation was to increase it, she said, "If you would plant those flowers, I would rather have it than anything else, Archie," using his name for the first time shyly, but in a tone that expressed how near she had been drawn to him in the last few minutes. There was something in the request, and in the sad, sweet tone in which it was made, that went to Archie's heart, and stirred him to say with a face aglow with generous impulse:

"I shall make it my garden."

Perhaps if Ida had cast her eyes on his garden, lying a few feet from her, mapped out distinctly with weeds, she might not have so treasured up his promise. But she knew that this square plot was his garden only when she saw it wrenched up, and ravaged, and in wild confusion an hour later.

"Has the pig been in again, Tom?" asked Mrs. John, as she and Ida looked down on the desolation which only the unskilled labour of a pig apparently could have wrought.

"It was Master Archie, mum. He's put 'em all on yon grave," nodding towards Ida.

Ida had already made Mrs. John happy with an account of Archie's goodness, and of the promise of which this transplantation was the earnest.

"I'm so sorry," began Ida.

"I'm not," said Mrs. John; "I've been

coveting his garden this long time. Besides, he'd never give you or me a moment's peace until he had done something for you. When he likes anyone very much, he's never happy till he gives them something."

This, "likes anyone very much," was rather strong for two days' acquaintance-ship, and for Archie's real feeling towards Ida; but the wish was father to the thought with Mrs. John, and father to the fact as it turned out. For, in truth, she did contrive to bring about at least one-half of her fine scheme. Before Ida's visit to the vicarage was over, Archie was in love with her—impetuously, of course.

Boys fall in love with their seniors, and, in all but years, Ida was years his senior. She had always for him the most winning looks in the world, she was his contrast in character, and she allowed him to do her kindnesses. So Archie fell headlong in love with ludicrous seriousness.

It is astonishing how passionately before the dawn of passion some children love; how the refraction and divine presentiment of the passion "rises ere it rise" upon them.

Archie shirked school—with Mrs. John's designing connivance—to haunt Ida like her shadow; he was always on the lookout to do her service, and he spent all his pocket-money in presents for her.

But the other half of Mrs. John's design was, of course, not so manageable. Ida's heart was too much taken up with grief, for love to find room in it. Nevertheless, afterwards, Archie's devotion made its way into it, just as words, which some preoccupation prevents us hearing when they are spoken, wait for admission in the anteroom of the mind, and enter on the departure of more pressing guests.

On the night before Ida's departure for Kingsford, Archie made her his final present—a writing-desk—for which Mrs. John supplied the funds, Archie's purse having been long depleted.

"I want you to write to me, Ida," said the boy plaintively, with his eager face looking pleadingly into hers.

Ida, lost in a wonder, which looked out through her eyes, at Archie's goodness towards her, made no answer to this request, but said only and helplessly:

"I've nothing to give."

"Yes, you have. I wish——" And then he paused ashamed.

"What, Archie? What is it?" eagerly.

"I wish you'd give me a bit of your hair," faltered the lovelorn youth, blushing furiously.

"My hair! But, Archie, I'm not going away altogether," completely taken aback.

"No matter, I wish you'd give me a bit."

"Of course I'll give you a bit. There, take as much as you like," letting down a deluge of dark silken hair.

"You give it, Ida," said Archie.

Ida fetched a pair of scissors, cut a long tress, and handed it to him, saying:

"I wish, Archie——" But before she could complete the sentence, Archie, as if moved by an uncontrollable impulse, flung both his arms round her neck and kissed her passionately, trembling all over with excitement.

"Ida, I love you." Ida's breath was taken away by the sudden and impetuous fervour of the embrace. "And I shall always love you better than anyone else in the world," continued Archie—"always."

"And I shall always love you, Archie," said Ida, when she came to herself, kissing him in turn affectionately, as an elder sister would kiss her little pet brother.

"Ida," continued Archie with ever-growing excitement, his arm round her neck and his head bent forward to look eagerly into her eyes—"Ida, I want you to say you will marry me when I grow up to be a man."

"Marry you!" faltered Ida; "I never thought—I don't think I shall ever marry, Archie," quite bewildered.

"Oh, Ida, and I love you so!" in a voice of despair.

"But you're only a child, Archie, you know, and——"

"I'm not a child," broke in Archie, cut to the quick by this terrible insult. "I shall be fourteen in September, and you're only thirteen, and I thought—I thought——" But here the boy broke down with a sob, and turned away to hide his unmanly tears.

Ida was pained and pricked to the heart, and put her arm round his neck, and said soothingly:

"I shall always love you, Archie—always, and I shall marry you, if you want me, when you're a man."

Whereupon Archie flung his arms round her neck again, and kissed and clung to

her, wetting her cheek with his childish tears.

At this point Mrs. John enters, and the "guilty things surprised" start asunder, Archie bolting ingloriously from the room, and Ida's face, through her disordered hair, blushing like the moon through clouds.

Mrs. John was delighted, but discreetly silent, and of course our reserved little maid was silent also.

"Ida, my dear, if you are going to wear your hair down your back we must bank it up some way, if we're to see anything of you," said the considerate little woman, considerably getting behind Ida to busy herself with the child's hair. When she had plaited and tied it with a red ribbon, which glowed against the glossy black, she said, "There! Let us see how you look in that style," coming to the front again to admire her with head on one side. "You'll always look what you are, child, the oldest and dearest little woman in the world," taking Ida's still glowing face between her hands, and kissing it with the kiss of a mother-in-law in posse, which differs from the kiss of a mother-in-law in esse, as wine from vinegar.

Next day Ida departed. Mrs. John only went with her to Leeds. Her betrothed had to go to school, but would yet have got out in time to have seen her off by train, if he hadn't been kept in by a most unmanly imposition. Mrs. John and Ida left themselves an hour's margin in Leeds, as Mrs. John had shopping to do, and Ida mysterious business—no other than the redemption of the gold chain, without which she dared not face Mrs. Tuck. She could not bring herself to explain this business to Mrs. John, whom she left to wait for her in a confectioner's, while she sped at a swift pace and a heart that beat time with it to the abhorred pawnbroker's. This gentleman, however, was much more scrupulous about returning than about receiving the chain. His conscience, now thoroughly awake, would not permit his giving it up without previous consultation with the police. This much-desired relief, we are glad to say, it had. For Ida, now at bay, hurried back to tell the whole story with much shame of face to Mrs. John, so disclosing depths in her past life, and depths in her heart, which endeared her doubly to that good little woman.

Mrs. John rushed impetuously up to the first policeman she saw, told him so much

of the story as was necessary to secure his help, and so did, not Ida only, but her country, service. For the policeman did not rest content with relieving the pawnbroker's conscience of the weight of the chain, but did what he could to restore it to a thoroughly healthy state by disburdening it of some really stolen goods, and sending it into a retreat for six months, to recover its tone in the wholesome solitude of Wakefield Jail.

This business done, Mrs. John and Ida hurried to the station, and Ida took her ticket, third-class, Mrs. John's expostulations notwithstanding. She would neither allow Mrs. John to pay for first or second class tickets, nor would she spend a farthing more of Mr. Tuck's money on herself than she could help. Her life of grinding poverty had taught her to be particular about a sixpence—that of course—but more than that, to be especially particular about a sixpence which was not her own. So Mrs. John had to submit.

As they walked up and down the platform waiting for the train, Ida was silent, but looked up into Mrs. John's face two or three times as if about to speak.

At last, as the train that was to take her backed in by the platform, and there were but three minutes left her, she hurried Mrs. John into the empty waiting-room, and looking up into her face with her solemn eyes, more solemn than ever, said only, "Mother did send you." But face and voice filled in the ellipsis of love and gratitude, and so thrilled Mrs. John that she took the child in her arms and kissed her again and again, till they had to rush to catch the moving train.

When Ida reached Kingsford it was night and wet, and she stood wretched by her slender luggage on the platform, waiting till the porters had attended to all the first and second class passengers. Then she ventured to ask one to take her luggage to a cab.

"Cab? There ain't none."

"How far is it to The Keep—to Mr. Tuck's?"

"It's a matter of three mile, or better."

Then, after a pause:

"Will you please take my luggage to the parcel office?" which was done accordingly, and Ida set out to walk through mud and rain the three miles and a half to The Keep.

Mrs. Tuck had sent the carriage to meet her, but the coachman having looked in vain in all the first-class carriages for a

young lady about eighteen, named Miss Luard, had driven away with a free conscience.

Nearly an hour after his return with this news Ida stood in the hall of The Keep wet, bedraggled, and bespattered with mud, while the footman went to announce the appearance of this questionable character. Mrs. Tuck herself came out.

"What do you want?"

"I'm Ida Luard," in a faltering voice and with a sinking heart.

"Ida Luard! Why, how old are you?"

"Thirteen."

Mrs. Tuck stood as though stupefied, but roused herself at last to ask:

"How did you come, child?"

"I walked."

All Mrs. Tuck's good-nature was on fire in a moment. She kissed Ida effusively and led her in and petted her, and even got Mr. Tuck to welcome her in his way—a fish-like way. But even Mr. Tuck looked kindly upon her when he heard that she had travelled third-class, and when he saw her precise account of every farthing he had sent her.

FLYAWAY JACK.

A MANX YARN.

THE Manx have an aptitude for inventing nicknames, which are indeed very necessary in the island, the same surnames being so prevalent that without some distinction there would be "confusion worse confounded." There are so many Kellys, for example, that they have to be differentiated into Kelly the Lug, Kelly Bigbones, Kelly Ballavinch (a village), Kelly Dhone (the Fair-haired), Kelly Moar (the Great), even Kelly Moar Kelly Beg (Kelly the Great, son of Kelly the Little), and so on. But how Flyaway Jack came by his singular name, nobody seemed to know. By trade, he was a cobbler; and as his curious hoppy walk often caused the loose ends of the apron that was tucked round his waist to flap up and down, this may, perhaps, have suggested the idea of wings, though I should have thought the position rather lower than usual. Perhaps he was so called on account of his temper, which was volcanic; or perhaps his sobriquet had its origin in one of his own strange stories.

Though loose of limb, he was powerfully built, rather tall, with but little flesh on his bones, and muscles like pin-wire. His hair, whiskers, and stubbly beard were of

a sandy-red colour—a sure sign that lava is somewhere about—his features were hard and sharp; his eyes, small, grey, and keen; and, to complete the picture, he usually wore both indoors and out an old peaked cap on the very back of his head. As for his age, it was the favourite bone of contention in the neighbourhood. When the conversation flagged, you had merely to ask, How old is Flyaway Jack? and every tongue was wagging in brisk dispute. External evidence put him at upwards of sixty; appearances, at a short forty.

In his youth he had been a smuggler—a very desperate one according to his own account. It was only when smuggling became an unprofitable and uncomfortable profession that these palmy days came to an end, and he took to cobbling; which he supplemented by laying prompt hands upon such unclaimed wreckage as floated ashore under his cottage, and generally by keeping an eye open for opportunities. Flyaway Jack, then, was a man of experience and resource, a cobbler and character at once; and as such he was interesting and amusing, a capital companion for a wet day. Many a pleasant hour have I spent with him; listening to the sea-stories that his imagination could readily supply, when his memory failed him.

He lived in a little thatched cottage, which faced the beach, and stood back in a recess, formed by a sudden broadening of the road that skirts Castletown Bay. While it looked almost as venerable as Castle Rushen, a slight bulging was the only sign of decrepitude; for the walls were of great thickness and built of unhewn stones of every shape and size, embedded, not in latter-day mud, but in mortar which had hardened with age, and was indeed quite petrified. The ladder-like staircase descended to the very door, which was always open; and of the two downstairs rooms, that on the right hand was Flyaway Jack's workshop. The floor was of hard clay, worn into hills and hollows; the chimney occupied a large protruding buttress; and though the fireplace was magnificent in its dimensions, the grate was small and simple—a couple of loose bricks and an iron bar—and the tiny window, deep-set in the thick wall, which was decorated with pictures from the illustrated papers, was used as a cupboard, rather to the detriment of the light.

After passing through the doorway, which the shrunken door made no pretence

of filling, you found yourself in the midst of leather, and even suspected that it was burning in the grate. Great tanned skins hung from the rafters, and were piled upon the table in the corner; the floor was in some places mountainous with chips; rows of old boots stood against the walls. Immediately opposite the telescopic window was Flyaway Jack, seated upon a compound arrangement of bench and tool-tray. His greeting was always cordial, one hand extended to shake, and the other pointing to the chair by the fire; not a word until you were seated. All further ceremony was dispensed with, he addressed everybody by his christian-name. One of my visits may be taken as a sample of many.

Shortly after I had occupied the vacant chair, there came creeping in old Johnnie Caggherty, the crab-catcher, a centenarian fossil, silent but reflective, with a little, bent, wizened body, a brown, deeply-furrowed face, and clothes to match.

"Well, Johnnie, how goes it?" asked Flyaway Jack cheerily.

"Aw middlin', boy, just middlin'. The crabs is scarce, very," was Johnnie's invariable response, accompanied by a doleful shaking of the head. The crabs were laid upon the floor for our inspection, and a finer collection it would have been hard to find. Still, those who plough the sea have as much right to grumble as those who dig the land.

When Johnnie had taken a seat upon a box by the fireside, there entered two stalwart, yellow-bearded fishermen, in knee-boots and blue guernseys; then one of the hobblers from the quay, and lastly, a lunatic. Perhaps this needs some explanation.

I am writing of a good many years ago, when there was no actual asylum in the island, only a building large enough to hold dangerous patients. The others either lived with their friends, or were boarded out and wandered at will about the country. One fellow, I remember, was rather given to hurling boulders at those whom he thought objectionable; but he was considered harmless, though I used to pass him somewhat gingerly. The majority of these unfortunates came from England; and as there is a Manx law forbidding the importation of paupers, and compelling ship-captains at their own expense to take them back again, I never could see why English lunatics should be more acceptable. However, the one had money and the other had

not, so the advantage of a few led to the inconvenience of many.

The individual who joined our party was a Miss Todd, a lady by birth, whose mania was to deck herself out in all manner of finery. If this alone be lunacy, I fear that one sex would be wholly engaged in locking up and watching the other; but Miss Todd, by carrying all her wardrobe on her back, committed the gross blunder of overstepping the line prescribed by custom. Without being too prying, I may say that she wore five dresses so arranged as to show that she had got them on, a shawl or two, a few neckties, or whatever you call them, and a couple of bonnets tastefully placed one above the other. This, her relatives decided, was going rather too far, so, like "Dame Eleanor Cobham, Gloucester's wife," she was banished to the Isle of Man. Her face was a perpetual simper. In brief, had she been a little less eccentric, she must have taken high rank in the fashionable world.

Her appearance in Flyaway Jack's cottage was due to a heavy shower, which threatened to spoil her finery. I offered her my seat, but she mendaciously replied that she preferred standing; and when I persisted, our host, waving me a dictatorial "No," called to his wife to bring "a chair for a lady." Until it arrived, Miss Todd amused herself with Johnnie Caggherty's crabs, which, though tied together, were crawling about before the fire—a dangerous pastime, watched by the fishermen with much interest, not to say expectancy. The scene would have been an excellent one for a painter.

At last we were all seated, the yellow-bearded ones upon the table, and when a hunk of stranded timber had been flung upon the fire, the hobbler, with a wink at me, said to our host:

"Let's have that yarn o' yours 'bout the cutter chasin' ye in the bay here. It'll help pass the time away till the rain gives over."

"Oh yes, please tell it, Mr. Flyaway Jack," seconded the lunatic, her hands clasped entreatingly.

There was a laugh at this singular style of address.

Although Flyaway Jack, who had a great dislike for his sobriquet, looked alarmingly explosive, he contented himself with a scornful:

"What better can you expect from a poor soft thing?"

This was very hard on poor Miss Todd,

who was quite ignorant of her sin, the words touching her on her sorest point, vanity, and she hung her head and remained unusually silent.

As there was an awkward pause, I said :

"I should greatly like to hear your story, Jack."

"Sure I don't min' tellin' it at all; but it's another thread that I'll get goin' first, so as not to be stoppin'."

Selecting a thread from the tray by his side, he waxed it, rubbed it until it became like wire, and then began to stitch vigorously at the boot he held between his knees. A very solid craftsman was Flyaway Jack, his work being well adapted for use among the sharp crags of Langness, the long, low, rocky promontory which creeps round the bay. At length he was ready, and though he sometimes turned to mark the effect of his words upon us, who were grouped around the fire, the exigencies of his work compelled him to sit facing the window during the greater part of the time he was speaking.

"In my younger days," he began, "there's no denyin' that the most gentleman'y business any wan could take to was smugglin'; an' it was such nice, clane, aisy, profitable work that on'y a few noodle-pated bodies kep' out o' it; an' it was sour-eyed enough they were when they saw the piles o' money we were makin' without so much as a haporth o' trouble. Tut! wherever you go it's mortal sure you are to come across a dog-in-the-manger, an' a mischievous baste he is, too. But let him pass. You see, the islan' 's well placed for just slippin' across, on the quiet like, to the neighbourin' countries; an' it's crowded the coast is with gran' caves an' holes an' glens for storin' o' the goods; an', as if that wasn't enough, every house worth spakin' about had great cellars runnin' far away un'er the groun'. Sure, now, it would ha' been a scandalous thing to ha' thrown away such beautiful opportunities; an' if Nature hadn't built Manxmen for smugglers, I'd just like to know what they are fit for? Any way, as everybody smuggled, I wasn't goin' for to run counter to them at all. 'Deed, what was I, to lift up my voice? A mere chit, with my way to make in the world honestly. So I just smuggled along with the rest."

I imagine that Flyaway Jack's introduction was addressed solely to myself. Old Johnnie Caggherty cannot be said to

have possessed a very tender conscience on the score of smuggling; and the same remark probably applies to the others, except perhaps Miss Todd. I don't know whether or not a lunatic is entitled to a conscience.

"As time went by, I rose in my profession, and people began to touch their hats to me, for I was handy enough when I turned my min' to a thing; an' what with good luck and mebbe seamanship, after a few years I came to be the master o' the Saucy Maid, the smartest little schooner as ever walked the Channel. The fun we used to have, to be sure, runnin' in un'er the Big Cellar yon'er, an' creepin' like dumb mice through the town at dead o' night, the wheels o' the cart muffled in crape—aye, an' the horses' feet, too, so as not to make a soun' at all."

"But, Jack," I ventured to say, "had you learnt navigation?"

"Not I," he answered with unmistakable contempt. "What more can a man want than a compass an' the stars? As long as I could see the Rhaid Mooar Ree Ghorree, I was quite content. An' what's that? you ask. The Big Road o' King Orry, or the Milky Way, as some call it."

"But what did you do on a dark night?" I asked.

"Aw, I just picked my way through it somehow."

"Puddles," suggested Miss Todd, simpering at the crabs at her feet.

"Quite so," said Flyaway Jack severely.

"You must have spoilt the crape," she added rather vaguely.

"Hoot! woman, be still; can't you? And now, sirs, to come to my story, which is that strange you'll har'ly believe it, though it's gospel truth, as sure as I'm sittin' here, an' nothin' can be more sartin than that. It was a dark night in November, the moon not up, an' great black clouds hangin' about the mountaintops, a sure sign it'll be puffy when the win's off the lan'. An' it was off the lan' for us on board o' the Saucy Maid. It was smooth water though, an' we were steppin' up Channel nicely, lavin' a long white wake behin' like a road o' snow; but there was a dirty look about the sky I didn't half like, so when we reached the back o' Langlish, it was right glad we were to see a fire blazin' among the rocks. We knew then that we could walk straight into the bay without any

fear o' being bothered with the Government cutter, which had the bad manners to be always pokin' its nose where it wasn't wanted; an' when by any chance we had happened to meet, it was like two tom-cats on the top o' a narrow wall, snappin' an' howlin' an' scratchin', and then one makin' a bolt o' it. But this time, as we were tould next day, some o' the lads on shoore had taken pity upon the poor thing, lying there in idleness; an' as they knew the Saucy Maid must be about due, they just sent the cutter down to the Calf on a fool's errand, so that there might be no chance o' our interferin' with one another; for it's far better to live with your neighbour peacefully than to be punchin' his face continually.

"The tide was tearin' along to the west'ard like a mill-race, so it wasn't long before we were roun' the Sk'r-ranes and inside o' the bay. Up to this time luck had favoured us nicely, an' if you'd on'y seen the way we handled the schooner I'm thinkin' you'd ha' said we deserved all we got—aye, an' more too, for it was a mighty bad thing that was comin' upon us. After we'd taken a short stretch towards Scarlet—for the win' was blowin' right out o' the bay—an' after we'd put her about an' fetched underneath this very house, what should the moon do but start up above Langlish, an' at the same moment that pitiful sneak o' a cutter shove her nose roun' the Stack o' Scarlet. Well, here was a nice business, if you like, sirs. It was fairly caught in a mousetrap we were. The mate un'er me was a man o' the name o' Quinney—Dick Quinney. Mobbe you'll remember him, Johnnie? Well, I signalled him alongside to where I was stannin' in the starn, an' says I, 'Quinney, here's a fine kettle o' fish, the like o' which I've naver seen in all my born days, and naver wish to see again.' An' says I, 'But how to get out o' it, that's what I want to know, for, come what may, I won't run the schooner ashore, an' leave her to yon'er harpies to pick an' steal, an' do what they like with. We'll make a run for it somehow.' He agreed with me on that, though he was a shallow-brained fallow, after all, so I just called up the crew an' tould 'em that we were goin' for to do some manoeuvrin', an' after that show a clane pair o' heels to the cutter, though I tell you honestly that I didn't see my way to it, and only thought it right to keep up their spirits. 'Grog,' says I, 'grog all roun', an' the master will help ye, an' then to work.' So

grog it was, pretty stiff, an' as they wiped their mouths with the backs o' their hands, every sowl on board looked as fierce as a tiger, ready to spring at the cutter if I was to give the word. But that wasn't my game at all, as long as it could be avoided. I always liked to have caution in front an' bravery comin' behin' it.

"So, instead of comin' to an anchor, as many would ha' done, I had just hove the schooner to, with the jib hauled to wind'ard, an' all the canvas, even to the topsail, set an' ready for a start in case of an unlucky accident like this was. You see, the cutter daren't fire at us, for we were lyin' between her an' the town, an' without tackin' she couldn't run down upon us, owin' to the way the win' was; but, just to make more sure, we crep' up a little nearer the harbour and waited. An' now, whether it was she thought we would give in at wance without any more trouble, or whether it was the white fatter was flyin' on board, for there had been some toughish fights o' late—anyway, she made as stupid a blunder as ever was. Her proper coorse was to ha' lain about midway between the Sk'r-ranes an' the Stack, an' to ha' sent her boats in to us, an' then there'd ha' been nothin' for it but fightin', an' there's no knowin' who'd ha' got the best o' it, for our lads were handy enough at that game. But, instead of that, what does the stupid thing do but make a long tack across the bay an' un'er Langlish, intendin' to slant over to Scarlet, and then run us down nicely. That is, sirs, if we were foolish enough to wait for her. I saw the move, though, an' shouted to Quinney to run up the balloon-jib for a spinnaker, an' almost quicker than I'm telling ye, the Saucy Maid was racin' before the win' like a mad thing. An' now another piece o' luck befell us, for the blunderin' cutter had been runnin' so high in the win', tryin' to creep up nearer to us, that when she tried to go about, she missed stays, an' before she'd got enough way on again, we were more than half across the bay. Sure, it was a right good start we'd got, an' now came as putty a chase as aver you saw, I'll warrant, both vessels rippin' through the water like a chisel through a lump o' black wood, an' lavin' a long track o' white shavin's behind.

"Says Quinney to me, rangin' alongside, 'It's away we are. Them dolts'll naver catch the Saucy Maid now.'

"'Don't be too sure,' says I, for the man had a consated way I didn't approve

of, and it wasn't for him to come to me with his opinions at all—unasked, at any rate.

"Oh, but——" says he.

"Oh, but——" says I, interruptin' him. 'And what's the use o' your "oh, buts"?' "Foddee yn moddey s' jerree tayrtyn y mwaagh." He understood that, an' went away sulky because I wouldn't listen to his nonsense."

"What does it mean, Jack?" I asked.

"It's an ould Manx proverb, 'Mebbe the last dog's catchin' the hare;' that's the meanin' o' it, an' it comes true pretty reg'lar. Anyway, it looked as if it was goin' for to be true in our case; for it was soon aisy to see that, what with the strong gusts tumblin' out o' the mountains yet har'ly ruffin' the sea, an' the cutter's bigger spread o' canvas, she was overhaulin' us quickly. Though I hated her so I would ha' seen her go to the bottom gladly, yet she was a gran' sight, glidin' along on an even keel like some great gull or gannet, an' her white sails stretched an' swellin', an' the moonlight streamin' upon her, an' the dark water aroun', an' the great hills behin' the sleepin' town. An' here were we, har'ly a mile ahead o' her; the crew all clustered together an' scarcely spakin', but just watchin' the white sails comin' nearer and nearer. The win' was blowin' harder up aloft than down on deck, and that was dippin' the schooner's nose into it an' stoppin' her way; though, for all that, she was tremblin' from stem to stern, havin' about as much canvas as she could carry safely. If it hadn't been runnin' we were, we must have taken some o' it off her; an' even as it was, when one squall after another struck her, I thought, for sure, to see some o' her top spars go—but they held on bravely, bendin' like whips.

"The cutter must ha' made pretty sure o' catchin' us. She never fired a shot, though every moment I expected to see her head yaw and hear a ball come whistlin' past our ears; but not at all, she just held on in our wake. Somethin' had to be done, and that quickly, or it was all up with us. The clouds clung to the mountains an' the moon to the blue sky, an' the win' was gettin' more steady as we left the lan' astarn; so there was no hope from that quarter.

"Look here, lads," I said, 'we're in a desperate case, an' there's on'y wan way out o' it that I can see. Wan o' us must go overboard.'

"They stared very hard at that, an'

some o' them began to pull long faces, till I felt well-nigh dancin' mad with them; an' when Quinney came forward as spokesman, I just tould him to hould his tongue, or I'd heave him overboard and get out o' two difficulties that way. There's nothin' like discipline; an' if you spake without showin' that you meant it, you'd far batter have been silent. So I showldered a belayin'-pin, an' after that, peace was restored, everywan being ready enough to obey.

"Says I, 'Now that I've made my intentions plain, I tell ye again that wan o' us must go overboard; but I wish on'y fair play, an' I'm goin' for to take my chance with the rest o' ye. Quinney, cut some twine into lengths, an' whoever draws the longest piece goes overboard with a bucket to hold on to.'

"Well, sirs, he did as I ordered him, an' when we had all drawn, I foun' that the longest piece had fallen to me. This was unlucky, too, for the schooner could ill afford to part with her master; but as I was preparin' to go, some o' them came forward an' said that that white-livered cur, Quinney, had chopped the end off his piece with a knife. So what did I do but up with the belayin'-pin an' knocked him flat on the deck; an' that was the way I argued with him. It was foolish o' me, however, for now that he was unable to go overboard I had to go, my piece being the next longest. But before I did so, I had the spinnaker taken in, and altered the schooner's head for the Calf. If she could on'y get there before she was caught, she might slip through the Soun', an' as it was nearly low water at the time, the big cutter wouldn't dare follow her. This was my plan for her safety; though, you see, it had to be compassed at some peril to myself. But I had no time to be thinkin' o' that; an' heavin' a bucket over the side I jumped after it.

"When I came up, puffin' and splashin', I began to think that I'd made a foolish mistake; for when the water's like ice, the courage is apt to get frozen too; an' it doesn't improve matters to see one vessel showin' you her heels, and another a good half-a-mile astarn. To tell the truth, I wished I was safely on board the schooner again; for, though I could swim like a fish, there was just a chance o' the cutter not seein' me, an' then a nice mess I should be in. All this an' a good deal more passed through my min' as I was strikin' out for the bucket; an' when I reached it

I raised one arm in the air, an' began to shout an' splash, doin' everything in my power to attract attention. You see, when the Saucy Maid shifted her course to the west'ard, the cutter followed suit; so I was some four or five hundred yards outside of where she would pass. An' beside that, the win' was blowin' right away from her an' comin' with mortal force over the water now that we were a good distance out. But to make a long tale short, she saw me at last, an' gave up the chase to pick me up, as I had expected, at least until I got into the water; an' when she was thirty yards away she hove to an' lowered a boat.

"An' now, sir, for the strange part o' my story. I'd hooked my arm into the handle o' the bucket, which had been half-sunk before; but now I chanced to lay it on its side facin' the quarter the win' was comin' from, an' a squall dashed down an' filled it like a mainsail, carryin' me along over the surface o' the water like a mackerel. It's true as I'm here. The boat couldn't catch me at all, though the oars were slashin' and tearin' like mad. It was the most ridic'ulous thing you ever saw. I lay on my back and laughed, it was so queer to see the surprised faces in the boat turnin' to look at me; though, I tell ye, the arms were near being dragged off my body. Well, here was a way out o' all my troubles, an' a way I'd never ha' thought of in a month o' Sundays. The boat stuck to it gamely, an' sometimes when there was a lull I thought she was goin' to catch me after all; but after a moment or two there would come another squall, an' rip! away I was shootin' like a rocket. Seein' this strange thing, the cutter swung her head roun' and gave chase too; an' I thought it was all up with me till a bright idea came into my head. I had been runnin' before the win', never thinkin' I could go any other way; but now I just twisted my legs roun' and used them as a rudder, an' away I went for the lan'. Well, sir, the long an' the short o' it was that the schooner got away through the Soun', an' I reached the shore safely, an' we had a right good laugh at the cutter."

"Was that why you are called 'Flyaway Jack'?" simpered Miss Todd.

But without waiting for an answer, she suddenly gave vent to the most awful shrieks, and refused to be comforted or explain. When we were sufficiently recovered to examine into the mystery for ourselves, we found that a gigantic crab had fastened on to her toe, to which it

clung with such characteristic persistency that its claw had to be broken off. Miss Todd wept a little, and then hobbled away; and, as the rain had stopped, the others followed her.

Our host was exceedingly indignant, regarding the interruption as a personal affront; and though truthful accuracy demands a few more details in his story, I was never afterwards able to obtain them. Perhaps, however, we should not be far wrong in supposing that it really was the origin of his curious name, Flyaway Jack.

LAURESTINUS.

How empty seems the firelit room,
Where half in glow, and half in gloom
Her life's mute tokens lie;
An open desk, a book laid down,
A mantle dropped, of gold and brown,
The bloodhound watching by.

An easel veiled, and thereupon
Her finished work, a victory won
By months of honest toil:
The fair fulfilment of her dreams
Among her native woods and streams,
Far from the world's turmoil.

Beside the bloodhound's mighty jaw
Her flower has dropped; with tender awe
I mark the hardy spray
Of laurestinus, glossy green,
White flowers and tiny buds between
All pink as unblown may.

I dare not touch the pretty prize,
O'er-watched by those half-open eyes;
But looking on the flower,
It seems most meet that she should wear
This blossom, blown in winter air
And washed by winter's shower.

No rose for her of ruddy hue,
With thorns to pierce, as love's thorns do,
Or steep the soul in sense;
No lily trembling on its stem,
However meet such diadem
For her white innocence.

But this bright, hardy evergreen,
That holds its blossoms white and clean
Above the dark, damp mould;
That shows alike to sun and shower
Its glossy leaf, its pearly flower,
Through all the winter cold.

It asks no shelter from the storm;
She seeks no love to keep her warm,
But love of closest kin;
The crown of work, its blessed cares,
The smile of Heaven, the poor man's prayers,
Are all she strives to win.

And so she fares, alone, apart,
Life-consecrate to God, to Art,
And giving both her best;
She wears, afar from worldly strife,
The blossom "of a blameless life"
Upon her quiet breast.

OUR FRENCH FRUIT-GARDEN.

OF the myriad Britons who are almost as familiar with the Seine as with their own Thames, not one in ten thousand perhaps has taken much heed of the river which

shares with it in giving a name to the metropolitan Department, or ever followed the windings of the Marne farther at least than Vincennes, a spot visited because it is reckoned among the "sights of Paris." Beyond that point it is rarely tracked by the tourist, even so far as the historic city of Meaux, within about thirty miles of the capital, though the territory which includes this part of its course is one to which we are indebted in no small degree. The valley in which it flows, and the fertile slopes which rise on either hand, may gladden the eyes of their inhabitants in spring with a flush of verdant and blossomy beauty, but to them will fall only a very moderate share of the rosy and golden crops of summer and autumn. It is our thirsty palates which will be cooled with their refreshing juices, for this is our French fruit-garden, and England is the grand consumer of what is grown within an area of many miles. A pleasant district it is, too, for any who wish to see something of French country life, and the writer can affirm from experience that a summer may be passed very agreeably among the towns and villages of this part of France.

Bearing a strong family resemblance to each other, as a good specimen of these may be named the twin villages of Couilly and St. Germain, each complete in itself, with church, mairie, and schools, though forming but one settlement only divided by a bridge. To the ordinary attractions of the neighbourhood, pure air and pretty scenery, is here added the charm of abundant water, delicious for drinking as drawn from many deep wells; offering occasional opportunities for boating on the canal which runs hence to Meaux, and a fine field for the angler in the little river Morin, a tributary of the Marne. Some of the idler inhabitants—ex-citizens of Paris, come to end their days here in rural retirement—haunt the banks of this little stream day after day for many long hours at a stretch, finding much excitement in the casual nibble of a pike of two or three pounds weight, the ordinary reward of their exertions being perhaps half-a-dozen gudgeon or bream, varied not unfrequently by a totally empty basket. But both river and canal are very prolific in weeds; these are prejudicial to the working of the many mills which are scattered about on the banks of the former, and they are therefore often drained off to a very low ebb in order to clear away these obstructions, leaving

oarsmen and anglers, their "occupation gone," to await wearily the time when the waters shall flow again. To the adjacent village of Villiers, where the current is a little less impeded, many Parisians make excursions on Sundays to enjoy the fishing there; but perhaps from paucity of accommodation, the so-called hotels being mere small inns, such flitting visitors rarely arrive at Couilly.

If aquatic pleasures sometimes fail, there are others which are less uncertain, and the lover of wild-flowers, whether botanist or mere posy-picker, will find here abundant treasures. Not only does white clematis weave its dense tangles in every hedge, but these "virgin bowers," as they are poetically termed in rural England, are sometimes tapestried with the large purple-flowered variety. Willow-herb glows beside the water, and yellow lilies gild its stream. Hoary mullein and parti-coloured bugloss rear their tall stems by the wayside, while pink mallow, dianthus, or centaury blush rosy below. Bluebells of various sizes wave in the breeze, only rivalled in colour by the turquoise stars of succory, or yet intenser azure of borage. Wild thyme and sweet marjoram clothe the sandy banks with their rich chocolate hues, and fiery troops of poppies light up every wheat-field. We miss, however, the elegant blue cornflower, which should bear the latter company; and the stately fox-glove, which so beautifies our English and Welsh landscapes, is here conspicuously absent. Something else, too, is lacking; the honeysuckle is seen twining among the bushes, but its odour bewrayeth it not; many a yellow spike looks like the apricot-scented agrimony of England, but there the likeness ends; and even that most powerful of perfumes, which renders our meadowsweet only bearable in very small quantities, is here represented by a faint tinge of scent when the flowers are held close to one's face. This may, perhaps, be due to a dryer climate than that of our island, but, whatever the cause, it is certainly a fact that wild flowers here scarcely appeal to any sense but that of sight.

The flourishing of these "weeds," as they are sometimes scornfully called, is but an additional outcome of the fertility of the soil, for they are not allowed to choke the good seed. Every kind of vegetable growth seems to prosper, and every proprietor appears to aim at having as great variety as possible. Hedges are but rarely

seen, they would occupy too much valuable space where the ground is so subdivided, for it is rather exceptional to find so much as a single acre covered with one kind of produce. Where cornfield ends, therefore, vineyard begins; no boundary intervenes between a patch of potatoes and one of maize, a few rows of beans, or some heads of mangold-wurzel; so that the country looks like one vast kitchen-garden. Various kinds of vegetation, indeed, are not merely not divided, but are even intermixed: currant-bushes grow between the vines, and pear or cherry trees spread their shadows amid the wheat. Walnut-trees are very abundant, springing up everywhere in the fields, though not in use to border the roadways; but it is only occasionally that a few sacks of the nuts are crushed for their oil. Ordinarily they are stored for the winter, and, eaten with bread, form an acceptable repast to the peasants.

The produce of the numerous vineyards, too, is made into ordinaire for home consumption, the grapes not being fine enough to make wine for exportation. Even for this limited use they hardly prove satisfactory. "When I was young, and I am now seventy-seven," said an old vintager, who entered into conversation with us one chilly day in June, "then indeed there were summers. I remember in 1845 we had one. You could not lie down on the open ground, for the very earth burned you, the sun had so scorched it; but what a season for the vines! Now we have not had a good one these fifteen years, not since the summer before the Prussians came. As to this year, why there are rows and rows of vines over yonder with not a single bunch upon them. And yet one is expected to pay the taxes all the same. Ah, those taxes, they do weigh upon one;" and the old man sighed and shrugged, as though the burden were pressing literally upon his aged but still vigorous shoulders. Nor have winters, of late, been more favourable than summers in this region. Even within the city of Meaux, the fine old yew-tree walk in the bishop's palace gardens—which was Bossuet's favourite outdoor study when composing his sermons as he paced up and down it, and which, until 1880, had looked just as it did in the days of the eloquent prelate—is now but a pitiful display of lifeless stems and brown withered leaves, the work of recent cruel frosts, while all about the country dead trees were so frequent as to be quite remarkable, the explanation of

their condition being always, "the cold winter two years ago."

Where laden trees and bushes are unprotected by wall, hedge, or ditch, an English stranger's first thought is, How unsafe—how exposed to plunderers! If adults are honest or indifferent, surely children will be always committing depredations! The sufficient reply is, Why should they plunder when every child has at home as much as it can desire? No wonder that when the more solid products of autumn succeed summer's lighter delicacies, illness often results from too free indulgence in these luxuries, and that choleraic attacks become prevalent.

But however freely the cultivators may treat themselves to this feast of Nature, far more is brought forth than could be consumed by themselves; and, with the exception of nuts and grapes, the greater part of the fruit is grown for exportation to England. On taking refuge from a storm one day in an outhouse, belonging to a little inn, the door of which stood open, we found it literally crammed with huge hampers of black-currants, being weighed previous to sending away, and on asking permission to buy a few for refreshment while waiting for the weather, were told to help ourselves without payment, petty retail dealings being below notice amid such abundance. A similar reply was made on another occasion, when we wished to gather from a cottager's garden some of the ruby clusters which hung so profusely on his red-currant bushes that crimson almost preponderated over green. Yet it is made easy for even small growers to contribute their share for shipment, for one day we heard the crier perambulating the villages to announce, with beat of drum, that to-morrow, at four p.m., M. Chose would be prepared at such a place to receive any quantity of currants, offering payment for them at the rate of thirty-three francs per hundred kilogrammes.

There is something besides fruit for which this district is famed, the well-known fromage de Brie, and on market-days the stalls for the sale of these flat, creamy cakes outnumber all others. But since cheese is a staple commodity, where are the cows? One may walk for miles and not see a single one, for instead of pasturing freely in open fields they are kept shut up in stables, and fed there with the leaves of maize, cut green for their use, or other fodder. Sheep, too, are scarcely ever visible, so that the landscape, however

otherwise charming, is strikingly deficient in animal life. There is no dulness, however, for towns or villages are not more than two or three miles apart; scattered houses occur in the intervals, and it is seldom that some vehicle is not within view upon the roads, or an azure gleam does not appear among corn or vines to betray some human presence. For in costume one hue reigns supreme. If the Holy Mother be little honoured in any other way, at least what devotees call "the Virgin's colour" is worn hereabouts by about nine-tenths of the population, though it is hardly upon her account. Blue blouses are assumed by even gentlemen en déshabillé, to which the working-classes add blue "continuations," and frequently a blue cap also; while among women below the grade of lady, in gowns, jackets, and aprons, at least for everyday wear, the same tint prevails almost universally. No doubt these thrifty French are well aware that indigo is the most durable dye that cotton can be made to take. With regard to head-dress, the younger females seldom cover their hair at all; shopkeepers and servants wear frilled mob-caps like those of the Parisians, white as only French washerwomen can whiten; and the older peasants content themselves with a coloured handkerchief wound turban-fashion round the head, the same head-dress therefore serving them indoors and out, a great saving of time and expense. In third-class railway-carriages, a bonnet is quite an exceptional sight.

The roads throughout the district are remarkably excellent, so even and hard, that in wet weather they are almost exempt from puddles, and in dry weather from dust. They are mostly lined with trees, affording grateful shade on hot days. These are sometimes limes or elms, but more often solemn rows of poplars, whitening the soil beneath them at midsummer with the tufts of cottony-down in which their seeds are embedded, till it looks as though a general goose-plucking had taken place in the vicinity, or a slight snow-shower had just fallen. A little later the ground is scattered still, though rather more sparingly, with equally white moths, about an inch long, developed from the caterpillars which feed on the poplar, and which, after having performed the grand duty of their life in laying eggs for another generation, lie exhausted at the foot of their native trees, blown about by the winds till they perish. These mimic snows are

especially observable on the banks of the canal, which is bordered by close rows of extra tall poplars of imposing solemnity. To walk beneath them, especially on a sultry summer day, when a glimpse of sunshine beyond deepens the gloom of their shadows, delightfully cool as it is to the bodily sensations, is yet almost as awe-inspiring to the mind as it is to pace the dusky aisles of some ancient cathedral. The sombre effect of the still solitude, guarded by these funereal sentinels, is heightened to a thrill of horror when we learn what ghastly fruit their boughs have borne—only a year ago a stranger was found hanging upon one of their branches, having evidently been robbed and murdered during the night, but to whom he had fallen a victim, who he was, or whence and why he had come there, has never been discovered.

The houses, usually kept in very good repair, are substantially built of brick, almost invariably coated, as are even the garden-walls, with cream-coloured cement, which mellows with time into many beautiful tints. The mairies, and perhaps one or two larger mansions, display slated tops, but throughout the neighbourhood tiles form the general roofing of house or hut, not a thatch being seen anywhere. And very harmonious is the aspect of these red roof-surmounting the yellowish white walls, especially when peeping out in the distance from a surrounding verdure of orchards or plantations, at different heights on the hilly ridges, which are usually terraced with two or three roadways rising one above another. In the village streets sometimes the gable, sometimes the side of the house, faces the highway, but the ordinary absence of front gardens takes off from the neat prettiness which characterises English cottages. The general impression given by the buildings is perhaps primarily one of well-to-do respectability, yet artistic charm is by no means lacking, for there is great variety of size and form, and everywhere an outside staircase, a wooden gallery, or quaint combination of projecting roofs, gives an air of picturesqueness. In one instance we came upon a most pictorial bit, hidden away behind modern houses—an old courtyard enclosing an ancient edifice, dating, it was said, from the days of Henri Quatre, with its round tower in the corner, surmounted by an extinguisher-shaped turret. Within doors, too, we may find perhaps a kitchen, which, with its huge open fireplace—where a brazen

cauldron hangs gipsy-fashion over the glowing logs, and a row of bright copper skillets glitters above—may offer a tempting subject to the painter; but the general aspect of the interiors, their bare walls, brick floors, and scanty furniture, give an idea of a ruder and more primitive style of living than is common among English country people of far smaller means than most of these possess.

St. Germain has only a mean modern place of worship; Couilly, a fine old Gothic church, which has stood for centuries, and is almost large enough for a cathedral. There is but one priest, however, who officiates in each at different hours, but only on Sundays, and except just when services are being held, they are kept close locked, for, though there was a time when the thief who stole from a mansion without scruple would yet have hesitated to enter the house of God with sacrilegious intent, this is hardly now the case, in proof whereof has not the church of Nogent-sur-Marne, not very far off, been twice robbed within the last twelve months? Nor was the priest ever met with in the villages except just at the hour for mass, and on our going to vespers one Sunday at Couilly the congregation assembled in the immense building was found to consist of three old women and five little girls.

Such being the state of Catholicity, how does it fare with the rival creed? At Quincy, about three miles from St. Germain, is a Protestant temple, a small barn-like building, methodistically bare within and without. Here the audience amounted sometimes to twenty, sometimes fell short of a dozen, though a majority of the sixteen hundred souls inhabiting Quincy are nominally Protestants, and this is the only Reformed place of worship within a large circuit. This indifference does not seem due to any want of zeal on the part of the pastor, if this may be judged of by his manner, for he warmly greets his flock individually, and after prayer, lesson, and hymns accompanied by an harmonium, pours forth his sermon in tones of such fervour as to make the walls reverberate, and with a vehemence of gesture that is almost alarming. The subject is "The Idea of Deity in Different Ages," and it is very well treated as he traces the progress of the primitive notion of the divinity as mere brute force to its final development as the loving Father revealed by Our Saviour, adverting then to modern beliefs and unbeliefs. Such a discourse, with all its allusions to Atheism,

Pantheism, and Agnosticism, seemed hardly suitable to the tiny group of shopkeepers, peasants, and children who had gathered to hear it, but perhaps it was a single concession to the spirit of the age, for on several other occasions the worthy pastor's sermons erred rather on the side of excessive simplicity, and were little more than the addresses usually delivered in Sunday-schools.

Where there is so little attendance on the services of religion it may be supposed that there is no very intimate acquaintance with its doctrines. The relative merits of the Catholic and Reformed faiths were estimated in an amusing way by an old farmeress who sat down beside us one evening in the fields, and questioned us with almost American freedom. On eliciting that we were Protestants, she exclaimed, "Ah, that is a fine religion, you can be married or buried for nothing, while we Catholics have to pay such enormous fees to our priests at our weddings or funerals;" and this seemed to be the only difference she knew of between the followers of Luther or of the Pope, though some instinct of loyalty to tradition kept her true to the profession, at least, of Romanism. It is indeed only to be married or to be buried that the vast majority of the population here ever enter their places of worship, and when some French friends well acquainted with various provinces of their country assured us that this was the least pious part of France, it was easy to believe the statement, for piety could scarcely be anywhere at a lower ebb.

"Certainly these people cannot be called devout, but are they moral?" was asked of an intelligent inhabitant. "They have no time to be otherwise," was the reply. "When people are at work early and late they cannot find leisure for dissipation." Leisure, indeed, seems a word of which they can hardly know the meaning. At five a.m. the ring of the church-bells calls them to labour, and at eight p.m. bids them leave the fields for their homes; but many, it is said, rise two hours earlier, and, evidently enough, all work did not cease with the curfew-peal. Even at midnight heavily-laden vehicles might be heard upon the roads, and from one farm a waggon was dispatched weekly to Paris which regularly travelled thither all night under the sole charge of a girl of sixteen and a dog. Another girl of twelve, eldest daughter of an invalid mother with many children, managed the whole household,

and cooked and washed for all the family, besides taking her part in field-work. Under this regimen she had developed, at the age of a mere child, into the appearance of a sturdy woman, and though this was a special instance, the young lasses commonly looked much older than their years. Nor does the week's toil end on Saturday night, for though on Sundays the accustomed summons to work does not sound from the steeple, the scythe or the sickle is still plied in the fields and the pruning-knife is busy among the vines. Every moment of time, every inch of territory, seem to be devoted to cultivation. Though the cottages which line the narrow village streets so rarely have any forecourt, not the less are the front walls as well as the others utilised for the training of vines or pear-trees, only guarded from passers-by brushing against them by a few sticks nailed across their stems. Where it does happen that there is a garden-wall, the outside towards the road, if the aspect be favourable, is sometimes made, equally with the interior, to bear its share in supporting some climbing fruit-tree.

The natural result of all this is an extraordinary prevalence of material prosperity. Many are rich; none are very poor; no pinched faces or ragged garments are to be seen. A boy who had torn the sleeves of his blouse was indeed so unique a spectacle, that he was at once seized upon by our artist-friend and strictly commanded not to let his mother mend them until his portrait in this picturesque condition should be completed. A sufficiency of food and decent raiment seems to be the portion of even the lowest, for, to all enquiries made about poor people, the only reply was, "There are none. Of course there are some who are not so well off as others, but there is no one in absolute indigence;" and observation only tended to confirm the statement. It is true the British workman's too common ideal of prosperity—fresh meat every day—is not attained; but as this, despite a general prejudice, is certainly not essential either to health or enjoyment, it is hardly to be deplored. The French peasant, however, has not that disdain for the art of cookery which is sometimes found among our working-classes, and knows how to make very appetising dishes from materials always at hand. A dish, for instance, which is very general in these parts, consists of potatoes, onions, and bacon cut

in small pieces, with various herbs or other vegetables for flavouring, the whole kept for some hours over a gentle fire till it forms a most savoury stew. Soup, made in the pot-au-feu, which appears more or less at every table, rich or poor—it is a received axiom that no children can thrive unless they consume plenty of soup—is usually the peasant's portion more than once in the day; and fruit, in this paradise of Pomona, of course forms quite an article of diet. But thrift has been early taught. It is a fashion for the maire and principal inhabitants to offer prizes in the communal schools, in addition to the books given by the school, and these always take the form of certificates of deposit in the savings-bank for sums varying from a napoleon to a franc. To this practical lesson in saving is added the example of parents and superiors too often carrying the habit to a pernicious extreme, for the virtuous frugality of the poorer class is balanced by the vicious penuriousness of those who have risen above them in fortune, but in little else, expenditure scarcely increasing with means. Really wealthy farmers, mill-owners, tannery proprietors, frequently dress and work like common labourers, grudge a doctor's attendance when ill, and will hardly indulge in change of air when their very lives depend upon it. It is true they will give their children a good education, but, as soon as school days are ended, they expect them to return to domestic drudgery. A miller's daughter who was married the other day, brought a dowry of sixty thousand francs to her bridegroom, who owned as much himself, while a grandfather made over to them as a wedding-present a mill valued at one hundred thousand francs. This girl had been sent for a time to an expensive boarding-school in Paris, but ever since her return had been acting as general servant in her parents' house, and would in all probability fulfil the same part in her own. In fact, the more intelligent residents agreed that Balzac might have laid here the scene of his *Eugénie Grandet*, and they would have felt the story to be no exaggeration.

Once a year at least this perpetual travail yields to a day, or rather a night of enjoyment. Each village holds its annual fête in the course of the summer or autumn, and Montguillon had fixed on the evening after the National Festival of July 14th.

Two or three toy and gingerbread stalls hold out baits to the children, but the

centre of attraction is a large booth, which travels about from one of these fêtes to another as their period arrives. Lined with striped cotton, and decorated only with small pendent tricolours, one end is parted off by a low barrier to form a sort of bar-room, where the old men sit at little tables over their wine, while the younger ones go in and out for an occasional glass. Another smaller enclosure at the side rails in a band of five musicians, and the rest of the space is devoted to the dancers, who pay threepence each on entry, no further tax being laid upon the ladies, whereas the gentlemen have to pay three sous for each dance in which they engage. A rather awkward business it appears both as regards payers and payee, as the collector, an elderly woman in black dress and white cap, glides in and out among the gyrating couples to gather this toll as soon as they begin to move, and the rustic has to keep hold of his partner as well as he can while he fumbles under his blouse for the necessary coppers. As one dance is no sooner over than another begins, and no able-bodied dancer cares to sit still while others are in motion, the expense becomes ultimately rather heavy, as the entertainment lasts from about eight p.m. till one or two o'clock in the morning.

The occasional handing round of a paper of sugar-plums seemed to be the only refreshment offered to partners, unless under that head might be included the hearty kiss upon each cheek, which was the customary parting salute ere the lady retired to her seat as waltz or quadrille ended. But there was no pushing or confusion due to not knowing steps or figures, and though now and then some rather lively displays of agility, and an occasional swinging round of partners with somewhat more force than was necessary, might be observed, yet really this rustic ball-room offered nothing that could shock the most decorous. The girls were mostly attired in plain dark-coloured merinos, their only ornament a tiny bow or brooch in the collar or lace tucker; for, though flowers grow here so freely, none had been gathered to wreath or deck their close-coiled and simply-braided tresses, and only one here and there wore even a rose or spray of honey-suckle at her bosom. So far, indeed, from any appearance of that elegance and coquettishness we are apt to attribute to French womankind, there was a positive deficiency of adornment, only a single one among the crowd of at least fifty or sixty young lasses

wearing any approach to a festive costume, and hers consisted only of a white muslin tunic which had seen some service, over a red and white striped petticoat. The men were nearly all in their ordinary blue blouses, with a staring paper tricolour pinned at the breast in patriotic recognition of the national anniversary.

Beyond these annual fêtes, the only provision for recreation apparent was the shooting-butt erected in every village—a narrow space enclosed between walls, and having at each end an arch of brickwork, filled in with straw. Here, on Sunday afternoons, a few, but only a few, of the men might be seen practising with bows and arrows, for muskets would be deemed too expensive.

A cheerful "Bon-jour" usually greets the passing stranger in this region; any little service requested is most courteously rendered; and a desire to enter into conversation is often shown. It is, therefore, not difficult to form cordial relations with the natives, and for an English visitor to do so seems almost a duty, as a sort of attempt at some slight reparation for the terrible descent once made here by our countrymen. In 1424, when the troops of the King of England and the Duke of Burgundy occupied jointly the town of Cotelommiers, they vexed this neighbourhood with incessant depredations. All the country around the Marne was ravaged by their incursions, harvests were carried off or destroyed, and farms pillaged and burnt. The prettiest spot hereabouts, a little wood where a stream makes its way down a ravine between leafy heights to join the river below, to this day bears the name of Bois de Misère. It is said that this ominous title still attests the frightful extremities to which the people were reduced at that time, when, the wood being probably of far greater extent, the poor creatures sought in it some slight shelter during what a local annalist justly calls, "Cette abominable guerre."

The recollection of these ancient miseries, however, has been pretty well effaced by far more recent troubles.

In the very dining-room where we take our meals the Prussians a few years ago stabled their horses, and wrenched the doors off their hinges to burn as firewood. Allusions to such reminiscences often occur. One elderly lady, fatigued now with a walk of a couple of miles, remarks: "Yet I had to trudge on foot all the twenty-seven miles between this place and Paris, and

with the snow on the ground, too, when I slipped through the German lines to rejoin my husband here; for it was the only way in which the journey could be accomplished. It was long before I recovered from its effects." Yet justice is rendered even to the inflictors of so many hardships. "I went at first to friends in the South," said another lady, "thinking the siege would only last a few weeks. After waiting six months I had to return, and found my house occupied by Prussian soldiers and completely dilapidated. Whenever they came to houses which had been abandoned they felt irritated and damaged them recklessly; but I cannot deny that when I returned and took up my abode with them, they did not behave badly. And, Frenchwoman as I am to the core, I must own that our enemies had one good quality—they were wonderfully kind to children. The great stalwart fellows were often seen trotting out our little boys and girls for a walk, or even hushing our babies off to sleep in their arms. Very likely they were themselves fathers of families, and would far rather have been peaceably at home with them than here fighting with us. Heaven send we may never again go to war!"

Surely no one could look around on this smiling fertile country and mix with its friendly and industrious inhabitants without responding to this prayer with a hearty Amen!

JENIFER.

BY ANNIE THOMAS (MRS. PENDER-CUDLIP).

CHAPTER XXXIV. "ARE YOU HAPPY?"

SHE found him standing by the fireplace, looking with evident interest at the various costly and beautiful ornaments that decorated the wide velvet mantel-board. She checked herself when she came within a few feet of him, clasped her hands loosely together, and stood there silent and motionless, waiting for him to begin the battle.

If she had been given more time, she would have changed the Watteau tea-gown of old-gold "Liberty" silk for a less becoming and more matronly garment. She knew she looked well in this happy combination of lace and soft Indian silk, and she did not want to look well in his eyes. If he found her plain and dowdy, he would be less likely to persecute her with his presence.

He looked round, after what seemed to her a long period of time, and smiled pleasantly.

"You don't appear to be overjoyed at the sight of me," he began affably.

"Why have you come?"

"To see for myself that you have feathered your nest comfortably, and taken care of yourself all round."

"Only that?"

He laughed.

"For what other cause should I come? I have, to be sure, a great desire to see the gentleman whose declining years you are likely to render so peaceful and happy."

"You have come—to ruin me!" she broke out wildly. "You tempted me to the deceit in the first place; you almost forced it upon me; and now—now you have come to gloat over your work—to witness the ruin you have made, to revel in the agonies of your victim, and hers."

"So you admit that the old gentleman is a 'victim,'" he laughed out lightly. "But, upon my word, Mrs. 'Tullamore'—that, I believe, is your name?—you do me injustice. So far from wishing to 'gloat' and 'revel' over your misery, I have come in the hope of witnessing the most perfect conjugal bliss. You really must forgive me for saying so to a lady of your status in society, but if you had only had instruction—good instruction—in your early—I mean your earlier youth—you would have made a fine actress."

She tottered to a chair and sank down upon it.

"Now, that bit of sudden faintness was very well done," he said approvingly. "Am I to be favoured with an introduction to Admiral Tullamore before dinner or not?"

"I am distraught!" the unhappy woman cried, burying her face in her hands. "You know I am—you know I am so frightened that my tongue can hardly utter the words my maddened mind conceives."

"Be a sensible woman, and calm your mind," he said reassuringly. "What there is to upset you in this situation I am at a loss to imagine. Here am I, a friend of your former husband—the best friend he ever had, the closest, in fact, the friend who saw him buried—come to congratulate his widow on having doffed her weeds and buried her dead. All I ask is a little hospitality for a few days, and as much sport as can be crammed into them. Surely an Irish gentleman will accord me that for his wife's sake."

"You must have all things as you will," she said hopelessly; "but listen! You shall not torture that true, honest, noble heart which I may be compelled to break; you shall not taunt him with the fact of the woman he believes to be his wife being a liar, a traitress, an impostor, a fraud. I will tell him what I am myself."

"No, you'll not; there's really no occasion for it," he said coolly, shaking his head admonishingly at her, "if you'll only believe it. You're a most excellent and practical woman; you have done a good thing for yourself, Mrs. Tullamore, and, as a friend, I advise you to keep the good things you've got, and not to make sentimental strife. Thanks for your offer of a servant to take my luggage to my room. I look forward to meeting the admiral at dinner with real pleasure."

"You are laying a trap for me."

"I'm doing nothing of the kind, madam," he replied impatiently; "we are both free people, and I've no desire to clip your wings or fetter you in any way. I came, if you'll only believe it, to assure myself that you were happy."

She tore her hands away from her face, and looked at him in profound surprise.

"Are you happy?" he asked with some approach to feeling.

"Happy!"

"Don't repeat the word as if you had never known what it signifies, and never can again. Tell me, if, after this brief visit of mine, you can feel sure that you'll never see me again, will you be happy then?"

She heaved a deep long sigh.

"I can never be happy till I've cleared my conscience, and confessed the wrong I've done him to Admiral Tullamore."

"Then you're a very foolish woman," he said impatiently. "Moreover, what wrong are you going to confess to having done him? You are sure to make him a good wife, and I'm sure, as a friend of your former husband's, I shall thoroughly approve of your choice from what I have heard of him."

"Let me leave you now, and think," she asked humbly; and he opened the door for her, and courteously bowed her out of the room.

She was a coward. The majority of women would have been in such a case as hers. Still, she forced herself to dress as Admiral Tullamore liked to see her dress, and went down to meet her guest in the drawing-room, and to present him to her husband.

It seemed to her like a dream, from which she must awake with a crash that would stamp out her mind and brain, when she found herself seated at the table presently discoursing pleasantly of the prospected sport for the morrow. The game-keepers were to receive Admiral Tullamore's strict commands that night concerning the best preserves, which were to be shot over by his wife's friend the next day. The best horse in the stable was to carry Mr. Whittler after the hounds the day after. Indeed, altogether Admiral Tullamore catered so liberally and heartily for the amusement of the self-invited guest, that her resolution to confess her fault and folly before she slept faltered again.

"Will you bring me a shooting-luncheon to-day?" Mr. Whittler asked his hostess as he was about to depart with the head-gamekeeper, a couple of beaters, and a brace of the finest pointers in the south of Ireland.

"If you wish it."

"The hollow under Kildale Wood will be the best place, me lady—about two o'clock," the gamekeeper suggested, and Admiral Tullamore cried out heartily:

"We'll be there to meet you with some scraps at that time, Mr. Whittler. Meanwhile, good sport to you; mind you bring home a good bag."

"There's no big game to fill it in this country," Whittler laughed. Then he went off with a respectful salutation to Mrs. Tullamore, leaving that lady with a mind burdened with an overwhelming sense of approaching calamity.

The best bottle of champagne from the cellar, the best pigeon-pie and cold game that the larder provided, together with the other etceteras of a shooting-luncheon, not forgetting some excellent curaçoa, were packed appetisingly and deposited in Mrs. Tullamore's four-wheeled dog-cart at about half-past one.

Then the lady, feeling singularly loth to start on the expedition, went to look for her husband, and he made her wheel round, as a proud mother does a child in a new and becoming dress, and inspected her costume.

It was his pride and pleasure to see her looking well, and she would so soon cease to be a source of either to him, that she strove to gratify his taste to the utmost this day.

Her dress of deep lapis-lazuli-blue serge, kilted to the waist with a well-fitting

short jacket of the same, trimmed with dark brown fur, fitted her like her skin, and suited both her complexion and figure admirably.

"I like women in winter dresses," he said approvingly; "muslins and fal-lals are all very well for young girls, but a woman always looks better in richer and more substantial gear."

"I don't like these tan-gloves with the deep blue dress, it's too much of a contrast. I ought to have gants de suède the same shade," she said, trying to take an interest in her attire to please him, for perhaps the last time.

Her hands shook as she gathered up the reins, and the two spirited ponies had it all their own way down the avenue. Luckily the gate was thrown open in time for them to pass through with safety, as she had lost temporary control of her little steeds. The thought, "Am I destined to break this dear old man's neck by my driving?" cut through her brain like a knife. The shock it gave her steadied her nerves, and with a long and a strong pull she got hold of her ponies' heads, and brought them back to a fast but steady trot.

"That was very like running away, my dear," he remarked.

"Wasn't it? They're so good generally, that I suppose I forgot they have the power to be naughty."

"Your hands shook as you gathered up the reins, and their mouths are very fine, you must remember. My dear one, you must be very careful; remember you are an old man's love, and if anything happened to you the old man's life would be over."

She could not look at him, she could not answer him. The blinding tears were in her eyes, the choking knot of strong emotion was in her throat. She was thankful that they were so near the trysting-place.

Kildale Hollow, under the great wood, was later than all the region round in changing its autumn robes of golden ferns, orange and crimson blackberry-leaves, and wreaths of honeysuckle, still in flower, for its wintry mantle of wither and decay. The bright sunshine was over it as they drove into it this day, and she could not help crying out in admiration of the glow of colour that was reflected upon the foliage from the sun's rays.

But her cry of admiration changed into a cry of horror as she caught sight of a group, men and dogs, huddled round some-

thing that lay prostrate on the ground. The "biggest" game that can fall to man's gun had fallen that day. The actor lay dead upon the ground, shot through the heart by his own hand.

And she sat there a living statue of intense suffering, while Admiral Tullamore gave brief, prompt directions as to what should be done. It was all too awful for the possibility of carrying on any further deception to linger in her mind. But while the servants were present she would spare him—the old man who had honoured her so highly.

When they moved slowly away, a ghastly burden between them on a hurdle, she got out of her carriage, and fell on her knees at his feet, and pleaded:

"Be merciful to me a sinner!"

"You a——"

She pointed towards the sad little group which was moving slowly out of sight.

"He was my husband," she said.

CHAPTER XXXV. DOWNHILL.

IN very truth the situation was a tragic one.

Not for a moment did Admiral Tullamore think that his wife was speaking the truth. He believed that the shock of the awful spectacle she had witnessed had turned her brain, and that her confession was mere mad raving.

So in his perplexity, bewilderment, pity, and grief, he first took off his hat, scratched his head to collect his ideas, and then took her hands soothingly and affectionately, still thinking that he was dealing with one whose mind was unstrung.

"Yes, yes, my dear," he said coaxingly, "I know all about it—all about it, my dear. We'll go home now, won't we? And you must let me drive your ponies for you for once, while you rest."

"You know all about it?" she cried, aghast at the tolerant way in which he was receiving her confession.

"Yes, yes, and it's all right, and we'll go away for a little change of air and scene," he said, still patting her hands soothingly, and praying that another burst of madness might not come on before he had got her safely back at Kildene, under the charge of her own maid.

The admiral, in fact, felt quite impatient of being made to linger a moment longer than was necessary in the scene of the late ghastly catastrophe. Mr. Whittler's awful death was a very sad and distressing thing, of course. But, as a matter of fact, the

admiral could not bring himself to feel any violent emotion about it. He had witnessed death a hundred times—death by sword and bayonet, and by drowning, death when he aimed his dart at friends and comrades in the battle, and on the ocean. This man had been neither friend nor comrade, indeed he was merely an acquaintance of a few hours' standing. It was shocking that the fatal accident should have occurred at all; but it was doubly shocking that it should have occurred at Kildene, to the detriment of Mrs. Tullamore's mind.

They drove home in silence, under the influence of mutual misunderstanding. She crying bitterly in shame, and fear, and contrition, wondering how he could endure to sit quietly by her side, and take her hand with such protecting tenderness, since he "knew all." He thinking with love and pity that her dear, womanly, tender heart was wrung to madness, since she wept so bitterly for a stranger, merely because he had been her bad husband's friend.

Some of his American admirers, who had come over to Europe in order to witness Mr. Whittler's success on the English stage, came over to Kildene, and had the corpse conveyed to London and buried in the Brompton Cemetery, and all the dramatic talent in London at the time attended the funeral to do honour to his memory.

And all this time his widow failed to bring herself up to the courage-point of making Admiral Tullamore comprehend the real truth.

But when she read the account of Mr. Whittler's funeral, when she realised that from him she had nothing more to dread, and felt that it rested with herself solely now whether she should remain the honoured mistress of Kildene, or cast herself out, poor, friendless, and shattered, on the wide world of want and woe, a better spirit, a humbler, braver spirit, possessed her; and it made her go to Admiral Tullamore with calmness and coherency, and tell him all her pitiful story, and impress him with the truth.

When she had told him all—everything, nothing extenuating, nothing excusing—she stood with downcast head waiting for the verdict.

There was silence, then at last a sob. She looked up. The old man was wiping his eyes and blowing his nose vehemently. When he could speak all he said was:

"My poor, hardly-treated, hardly-tempted dear, you must go off to Dublin to-day, and to-morrow we'll be married over again, and we'll never speak of all that has happened before to-day as long as we live."

But if Mr. Whittler's death brought relief from slavery which had been worse than death, and eventually peace and prosperity to Mrs. Tullamore, it brought disappointment, and what he regarded as ruin, upon Captain Edgecumb.

He had, under the influence of the glorious success on the stage for Jenifer which Mr. Whittler had foretold so glowingly, risen from the ashes of his despair at her failure as a lyric artist, and become brightly hopeful again. And now, all in a moment, his hopes lay shattered and dead at his feet. And he told himself that he was tied for life to a woman who didn't love him, and, what was worse, who would never make any money for him.

His temper, under the combined circumstances of disappointment and what he regarded as penury, became rapidly one of those corroding things that cannot fail to wear the freshness and brightness out of the best and brightest women's hearts. Jenifer struggled on week after week and month after month, trying to keep the home-atmosphere clear, and at the same time to give singing-lessons, that she might preserve something like independence. But the period was an awful one, and she met with scant sympathy in her endurance of it from anyone but her mother.

It was a daily penance to Jenifer to see the way in which her husband permitted her mother to feel that her presence in their house was a nuisance to him. Yet, when goaded into resentment by his scant courtesy and ill-concealed dissatisfaction at her being there, Mrs. Ray would propose removing to another home, he would protest against the proposal as being unjust and injurious to himself.

"If she goes, she will take the pittance she gives you for her maintenance away with her, and I shall be left more in the lurch than ever," he would say to Jenifer, who always abstained from reminding him that all he contributed towards the household was wax-candles and good cigars. The remnant that was left to him of what money he had ever had, just sufficed to provide him with these trifles. And "Poor fellow! poor, bitterly-disappointed fellow! while I can work for the common necessities of life, he shall have these poor

pleasures of his still," Jenifer would say to herself and her mother, and old Mrs. Ray would applaud her determination, and secretly weep over her own inability to give more than her "all" to help her devoted daughter.

But there came a time when Jenifer could not work. When the toil of going long distances in draughty omnibuses to give singing-lessons at five shillings an hour to daughters of mothers who never thought that the teacher of singing could ever be cold, weary, or hungry, and so never offered her either luncheon or a fire, became first painful and dangerous, and then impossible to Jenifer. For a little son was born to her, and for his sake the toil and the battle of her unremunerative career had to be given up for a time.

From the day of her child's birth, Jenifer, though a poorer woman, was a much happier one. Once again Captain Edgecumb, "for the sake of the little chap at home," who needed so many things, began to feel that it behoved him to do a man's work in the world. As soon as he developed this energy, an opportunity of exercising it was granted to him, and though the stipend of this new clerkship was miserably small, compared with that of the secretaryship which he had so injudiciously resigned, still Jenifer undertook to make it do "for Boy's sake, with mother's help."

It cannot be said that the Edgecumb family put Jenifer's own brothers to shame by the amount of attention shown to, and interest displayed in, the little struggling family at this epoch. Mrs. Archie Campbell made a few spasmodic attempts to keep up intercourse with "Harry's wife," but social forces were against her. There were so many people belonging to Archie's set, whom they were compelled to ask to dine at stated intervals, that the brother and sister-in-law, who were "out of it," gradually got forgotten.

On the occasion of the elder Mrs. Edgecumb paying a ceremonial visit to her son Harry's first-born—which she did not do until that first-born had blinked at the world with enquiring grey-hazel eyes for three months—her nerves had a severe trial. She made that trial the matter of maternal counsel to her son when next she saw him.

"What a pity it is Jenifer doesn't keep a proper parlour-maid," she began pathetically. "I was more pained than I can

express by the manners of that young person who opened the door to me at your house yesterday. For a moment I thought I must be doing 'parish work,' instead of calling on the wife of my own son—a respectable parlour-maid is so very essential."

"Jenifer seems to think we can't afford one, mother, and indeed she's right; there are even now more mouths to feed than I can fill."

"Ah, such a pity that you threw yourself away as you did," his mother rejoined plaintively; "not that I find fault for one moment with Jenifer, only she hasn't the faintest notion of management, or of making the best appearance possible. Why not a parlour-maid instead of that very consequential nurse?"

"Oh, the boy must have a good nurse," the father answered promptly. He could bear to hear his wife found fault with, but he could not bear to hear that his little son should "do without" aught that might conduce to his weal.

"Nonsense, Harry! A girl, a decent girl of twelve or fourteen, can nurse the baby, or, as Jenifer is leading an idle life now, why can't she look after it herself? You ought to insist upon her taking a little more labour on herself personally, and having an excellent parlour-maid."

"I can't insist upon her doing anything, I suppose, till I can give her the money to do it with," he grumbled. And then his mother sighed and shook her head, and said she always had "disapproved of men marrying girls who wanted to go out in the world and make themselves conspicuous."

As was only natural, Jenifer had wanted to have her own brother Hubert to be one of the sponsors for her own first-born son. But circumstances had been against her. Mrs. Hubert Ray was celebrating her own return to Moor Royal by a series of well-managed and well-played theatrical entertainments, and she could not spare Hugh.

"Besides, it will only be a pokey sort of affair, the christening," she said to her sister Flora; "if Jenifer had the courage to secure a bishop to baptise her child, I'd even go myself. But to go up to town just now, when I'm establishing myself so well in the county, for nothing, would be folly."

"Anyway, let Hugh go," Flora said.

"Why should he? Just to be harassed by the sight of their impecuniosity. No! I won't persuade him to go. He's such an

affectionate fellow that he can't bear to think of his mother living in less style than she used to live in. Yet, as I tell him, he can't help her. He has me to think of, and it's a man's duty to think of his wife first, isn't it, Flora?"

"I wonder whether Captain Edgecumb thinks of his wife first," Flora said thoughtfully.

"I don't suppose he does; but then, that's just it. Jenifer doesn't want people to give up everything for her, and think of her before everybody else. So silly of her, I always think, especially in dealing with a selfish fellow like Captain Edgecumb; in fact, it's wrong. I should have made him think much less of himself, if I had married him. Look at Hugh."

"I often look at Hugh, Effie, and at you too, and do you know I've come to the conclusion that he's not as weak—yieldingly weak, I mean—nor you so selfish as you appear. You two 'get on,' thank Heaven!"

"Thank Heaven!" Effie echoed so heartily that Mrs. Jervoise feared her sister might go on to say:

"I renounce hunting, and pretty dresses, my own way, and every other snare that has been laid for me."

However, Effie did nothing of the sort. She only said:

"If Hugh likes to go to the christening of Jenifer's boy I won't say a word against it."

It was unfortunate that, when Hubert, after refusing, wrote to his sister to say he could come, she had provided other and more ready sponsors. Mr. Boldero was one, and two of Captain Edgecumb's relations the others, and the little boy was launched into the world with the names of "John Boldero Ray" before his surname of "Edgecumb."

Down at Moor Royal the ball was rolling far too fast. Effie, in her praiseworthy desire to efface all memories of other and inferior Mrs. Rays who had gone before her, strained all her resources too hard, and eventually cracked them.

It was not that she was ostentatious, or absurdly extravagant, it was only that she loved to look at harmonies and the other best things this world affords. It was altogether inconsequent and opposed to her sense of the fitness of things that the

mistress of Moor Royal should not deal out hospitality and pleasure to the neighbourhood with a lavish hand. That was all. And her conception of the situation was correct. Only it was an expensive one.

So difficulties—money difficulties—that would not let themselves be set aside and forgotten, were perpetually recurring at Moor Royal, and were as perpetually being cleared away by Mrs. Jervoise, whose sympathy and regard for her sister were of an unfailing sort that would have gone far to redeem a much more faulty character than Flora's.

And in Jack's household, at the Home Farm, a coarser style of extravagance prevailed. Minnie had been a thrifty housekeeper when she first became Mrs. Jack Ray, but the temptations of her new position had soon grown too strong for her. She was not an idle woman by nature, but to work with her hands seemed to her to be an "unladylike" thing to do. And her head gave her no occupation.

So being destitute of all mental resources, and disdaining to occupy herself in any household labours, Mrs. Jack Ray, by way of passing the time, spent all the money she could lay her hands upon in the purchase of finery for her own wear at the Exeter shops; and when she could not lay her hands on any money, she had the finery still by going in debt for it.

When the three years expired, at the end of which the sealed letter containing the late Mr. Ray's last will was to be read, both his sons were in sad straits for want of money, and both of them had alienated themselves entirely from their mother and sister.

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BY BASIL.

AUTHOR OF "LOVE THE DEBT," ETC.

CHAPTER XV. "AMOUR FAIT BEAUCOUP, MAIS ARGENT FAIT TOUT——"

POOR little Ida, drenched, bedraggled, bespattered, a beggar-maid, standing heart-sick in the hall of The Keep; and this superb beauty standing in that hall seven years later, in queenly apparel and receiving queenly homage from those to whom all others paid homage—the serene highnesses of the county; is the same person and recognisably the same. The face does not seem to have grown a day older, nor has the heart which looks still through the same set sad eyes. To-night there is a great ball at The Keep and in the intervals of the dance the cool hall is crowded. Ida receives there the triple homage of the daughter of the house (by adoption), of a belle, and of an heiress. Rumour gives her four thousand pounds a year on the death of the fast-failing Mr. Tuck; and therefore rumour gives her also the title of the belle, not of the county only, but of the country. It was confidently said if she had come out in town, or would spend a single season there, she would command a higher rent from a photographer than any professional beauty. Yet anyone who could look at Ida without seeing (if such a thing be conceivable) the ineffable loveliness of four thousand pounds a year in her face would still pronounce her superbly handsome, though he might, perhaps, think her beauty—her lustrous eyes notwithstanding—of too cold and statuesque a type. Rumour, indeed, had it that she was icy cold, haughty, and heartless; and that she held her hand poised like an auctioneer's hammer, waiting with a passionless neutrality to

let it fall at the nod of the highest bidder. She had refused already, it was said, two regiments, a dozen parishes, and half-a-dozen estates; but here rumour did injustice to the officers, clergy, and country gentlemen of the neighbourhood, and to Ida herself most of all. She was the last girl in the world to encourage wholesale and hopeless advances. In truth it was Ida's very humility, and warmth, and wealth of heart that got her the name of being haughty and heartless. Hearing everyone every day, and Mrs. Tuck most of all, talk of the brilliant match she ought to make with her prospects, she had come to regard her prospects as everything, and herself as nothing, in the world's eyes and in those of her suitors to be. And besides this motive for chilling and checking the first advances of such suitors, there was another which may seem well-nigh incredible to the reader. It will be remembered with what coldness her heart, preoccupied with grief, accepted Archie's boyish proposal. Nevertheless, afterwards, the idea of it and of all the boy's generous goodness to her in her desolation "did sweetly creep into her imagination," and she treasured his image as that of a suitor who loved her when she was but a beggar-maid—the only suitor of whom she could feel sure that he had loved her for herself alone. True, Archie was little more than a child at the time, but Ida at the time was a good deal more than a child—was almost a woman in all but years. And at the time her heart, harrowed up by sorrow and softened with the rain of tears, was best prepared for the seed which had fallen into it. One thing more—the soil into which it dropped was suited only for a few plants of deep and slow growth. "He that hath many friends hath none," says Aristotle, and Ida's friendships, fit and few, were fast and for life.

If then, six months before the period at which we have now arrived, Archie had claimed her old promise "to marry him, when he became a man, if he asked her," he would certainly not have met with a decided refusal. He had then the chance to ask her. They met most unexpectedly at the house of a common friend, and stayed together for a week under the same roof. And the effect of the meeting upon Ida, if we may betray her maiden thoughts, was electrical. He seemed to her all, and more than all, she had pictured him in her imagination. She never forgot the first meeting with him after all those years of dreaming upon him.

Sitting in my window
 Printing my thoughts in lawn, I saw a god,
 I thought (but it was you), enter those gates;
 My blood flew out and back again, as fast
 As I had puffed it forth and sucked it in
 Like breath; then was I called away in haste
 To entertain you: Never was a man
 Thrust from a sheepcote to a sceptre, raised
 So high in thoughts as I. You left a kiss
 Upon these lips then, which I mean to keep
 From you for ever. I did hear you talk
 Far above singing!

But if Ida felt, or rather because she felt, at this meeting all that is expressed in this exquisite passage, she studiously, too studiously, concealed the feeling.

I find she loves him much, because she hides it—
 Love teaches cunning even to innocence;
 And, when he gets possession, his first work
 Is to dig deep within a heart, and there
 Lie hid, and like a miser in the dark,
 To feast alone.

Now Archie also had his prepossessions about Ida, and judged her thereby. He had heard—it was the universal rumour about the heiress—that she was haughty and heartless, and he seemed to find her so. The remembrance of his boyish proposal and of her promise, the consciousness that years had deepened her regard for him and the fear that they had effaced his regard for her, and, lastly and chiefly, love itself, made our reserved heroine more shy and distant than ever. Thus Archie, though he too felt his love for her, which had never died out, revive and glow, yet proudly kept the distance at which her pride seemed to keep him. Besides, there is this thing to be remembered about the youth, that, whether in love or friendship, he must be giver, not receiver, benefactor not beneficiary. A girl must have many and immense merits to counterbalance in his eyes the possession of four thousand pounds a year—an inconceivable state of mind to those who forget that he was very young and that he was the son of a spendthrift. Thus this meeting, of which Mrs. John had heard

with such hope of the furtherance of her cherished scheme, seemed to overcast it altogether.

Yet let this be noted, that, as the preciousness of all mortal things is due to their scarcity, and of all mortal achievements and attainments to their difficulty, Ida and Archie henceforth thought more of each other's love than if they had known that it was to have been had for the asking.

But all this time we have left Ida standing in the hall. She is little likely to miss us with that crowd of worshippers around her, and among them two very high bidders—Lord Ellerdale and Mr. George Seville-Sutton, representing respectively the highest title and the largest property in the neighbourhood. It was delightful to hear Mrs. Tuck hesitate between these two. She would, so to speak, first try one and then the other (like a serviceable stuff dress and a showy silk one) on Ida, and consider with her head on one side which became her best. It was no more use for Ida than for M. Jourdain to protest that the clothes didn't fit. The conversation then took the precise turn of that in *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*:

M. Jourdain: "Vous m'avais aussi fait faire des soulières qui me blessent furieusement."

Tailleur: "Point du tout, monsieur."

M. Jourdain: "Comment point du tout?"

Tailleur: "Non, ils ne vous blessent point."

M. Jourdain: "Je vous dis qu'ils me blessent, moi."

Tailleur: "Vous vous imaginez cela."

And Mrs. Tuck also fell back invariably on the triumphant argument of the tailor—that it was not likely that she, who had been fitting folk (or match-making) all her life, should not know best whether the shoe pinched Ida or not. Nevertheless Ida, with the headstrong dogmatism of youth, maintained that neither of these gentlemen suited her. Lord Ellerdale could talk of nothing but shooting, and Mr. Seville-Sutton could talk of nothing at all. But, of the two, Ida held his lordship to be the least insufferable. Mr. Seville-Sutton was the merest automaton of propriety. He seemed to regard himself—as concerns this matter of perfect gentlemanly propriety—something in the light of a great town-hall clock, from which all the little watches of the countryside were to take their time. Therefore it behoved him to be always right to the second. Hence he was

"tedious as a king"—all ceremony—and to-night he "bestowed all his tediousness" on Ida.

He now leads her from the hall for the next dance, a waltz, which he dances most majestically in the short and few intervals between collisions; for as the little watches present do not take their time from him, Ida is knocked about like a billiard-ball, and is glad at last to be shot into a corner as into a pocket. Here Mr. Seville-Sutton apologises for the awkwardness of the others. If he jostled a planet he would feel aggrieved by its trespass on his orbit. Having said a severe something about "bad form," he asked for the third time to-night after Mr. Tuck's health. Mr. Tuck, by the way, never now puts in an appearance on these festive occasions. He retires to a distant wing of The Keep, to a chamber "deaf to noise and blind to light," and is there coddled at intervals by Mrs. Tuck. Ida for the third time replies that "Mr. Tuck is not so well, thank you," and Mr. Seville-Sutton, encouraged by the hope of the immediate possession of four thousand pounds a year, and flurried by the fear of Lord Ellerdale anticipating him, tries for the third time to make up his mind to propose to her. He had, 'tis true, some doubts about the propriety of proposing for her in her own house, but, after all, only a refusal would have made this awkward, and the refusal of Mr. George Seville-Sutton was a contingency not worth taking into calculation.

"There is a map of Mr. Tuck's property, Miss Luard, which I am anxious to see and which Mr. Tuck was so good as to say I might see on my next visit to The Keep. Do you think I might take the liberty of glancing at it to-night? Only a little matter of boundaries between his property and mine that I wished to look into," with a slight shrug expressive of the infinitesimal importance of a square mile or two, more or less, of land to him.

In truth, Mr. Seville-Sutton made this request with the object of getting Ida to himself in the library, where the map was, and where the sight of the broad acres marked on it might decide him to propose. For Mr. Seville-Sutton, though a young man, was, as most men are, avaricious in proportion to his riches. Ida led the way to the library, without the least suspicion of what might be in store for her. This question of the boundaries between the two estates had of late been the one burden of Mr. Tuck's conversation, who dwelt

always with tedious iteration on any topic bearing upon his pecuniary interests. So Ida, thinking Mr. Seville-Sutton's request very natural and innocent, led the way to the library with a heart lightened by the hope that she might rid herself then of a portentous bore.

She soon found the map, and spread it on a table in a recess between two book-cases. "Yes, this is it, Mr. Seville-Sutton," she said, and turned to go.

Therefore Mr. Seville-Sutton had to make his mind up in a moment with what for him, was headlong precipitation.

"Thank you—thank you. Pardon me. Pray don't go, Miss Luard—one moment."

These breathless sentences were as startling from him as the sudden shying of a hearse-horse; but soon recovering himself, he fell back into his proper professional pace.

"Miss Luard," he said, with the imposing air of a bishop presenting a Sunday-school girl with a first prize. "Miss Luard, may I venture to hope that my attentions have not been—ah—unmarked, and have not been unwelcome to you?" Here, before Ida could recover herself, he advanced a step from the recess to be ready at the proper moment to take her hand. "I have long been hoping for this opportunity to offer you my hand and to ask for yours."

Here was the cue for taking her hand, but, just as he took it, he dropped it at the sound of a quick foot at the door, and stepped back instinctively into the recess.

It was Lord Ellerdale, to whom Ida was engaged for the next dance.

"Oh, Miss Luard, here you are! I've been looking all over the place for you. Booked to me, you know, for this galop. I believe you hid here to shirk me. Now didn't you—eh?"

"Indeed no; I was just coming out."

Ida, as she said this, looked, as she well might, confused and embarrassed, and this confusion and embarrassment suggested a bright idea to his lordship, who was not without the vanity of youth, blown into full bloom by the flatterers of his rank. He had been told often enough that Ida was his for the asking, and he had too good an opinion of himself and of her to doubt it.

Her conscious and confused manner therefore, suggested to him the bright idea that she had hid herself here with a view to a tête-à-tête with him when he sought

her out for the dance. Else, why should she be, just then, alone in the library, of all places?

Now, Ida had looked lovely all the evening, and she was looking most lovely of all at this moment; and though her charms might not have turned the scale which her fortune had already weighted even, her appreciation of his charms, expressed through these tell-tale and becoming blushes, did.

Why not propose now? He would never get a better chance, or find himself and her in a better mood.

"No, you needn't come. I'll give up the gallop if you'll give me something else instead. Miss Luard—Ida—you know what that is," taking the hand his rival had just dropped.

Here's a situation for you! Two proposals in two minutes by two rivals within two paces of each other!

But before Ida could think of the most delicate way of rejecting one suitor within earshot of another, Mrs. Tuck came to the rescue, calling out "Ida," as she made for the library to look for her.

Ida, thinking it best to intercept her before she entered to add to the complication, said hurriedly, in horrible confusion, "Mrs. Tuck wants me, my lord," and was gone.

Perhaps it was the best way out of it. Any way, Ida had not the presence of mind to think of a better.

His lordship waited until Mrs. Tuck must have been well out of his way, then he made for the door, but stopped half-way, arrested by the thought that it was just possible that Ida might return to accept him. He was sure she would accept him, but he was not at all sure that she was the kind of girl to return coolly to hear his proposal out.

Still, it was just possible, and he would wait a minute or two longer, if only to recover from his agitation. For his lordship's heart beat like a watch, and not with the stately clock-movement of Mr. Seville-Sutton's.

In case of the entrance of any other than Ida, he thought it best to account for his presence there by taking a book, and in looking for a book he found Mr. Seville-Sutton.

"Sutton!" he exclaimed, and then, seeing it all, as he thought, in a moment, he faltered, "Miss Luard has—has accepted you?"

Mr. Seville-Sutton had never in his life

been taken so aback; nevertheless, he was still able to say in his buckram manner, with an assenting bow:

"I had just proposed for her."

He almost believed that Ida had tacitly accepted him, and he fully believed that she would have explicitly accepted him but for Lord Ellerdale's untoward interruption. Still, he was glad to prevent, by that assenting bow, his rival's putting her constancy to the test of further pursuit by him. This keen competition put her hand at a premium in his eyes.

Lord Ellerdale grew white with rage, furious with himself, with Ida, and most of all with Mr. Seville-Sutton.

"Why hide there unless for eaves-dropping? I took you for a gentleman."

This to Mr. George Seville-Sutton! Hence that deadly duel, at which the county stood aghast—fought, not in Belgium, but at the hustings, whereby the great Conservative party was split in two, and a Radical soap-boiler from Birmingham was returned at the head of the poll! Unspeakable! But we do not aspire to deal with these high matters.

Lord Ellerdale, having shot the fiery dart which kindled this world-wasting conflagration, left the library and the house in deadly dudgeon. If he had waited five minutes, Mr. Seville-Sutton might have made a retort, but his vast mind moved slowly, and it was not until four months later that he resolved to shake society to its base by the practical retort of opposing Lord Ellerdale's re-election. For the present he would stay his thirst for revenge by making absolutely sure of Ida. This, however, was not so easy. He could not get her to himself again, and was fain to be content with pressing her hand in taking his leave, and promising, in a voice markedly subdued, to do himself the honour of calling upon her to-morrow.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Tuck was in a state of distraction at the sudden, rude, unaccountable disappearance of Lord Ellerdale. Where had he gone? Why had he gone? His lordship, of all people, the observed of all observers—who was to have taken her in to supper, too! It was disastrous. For Mrs. Tuck worshipped rank with more than Philistine fervour. For the rest of the evening, until the last guest had departed, she went adrift as a ship that has had its rudder wrenched away; driven hither and thither, and letting things go as they would—which was very unlike her, as she took pleasure in arranging

everything for everyone, from a waltz to a wedding.

Nor was she the less discomposed because she suspected the truth, or what was very near the truth—that Ida had refused his lordship, who had taken his refusal after the manner of a petted and petulant boy.

No sooner, then, were she and Ida left alone in the deserted banquet-hall than she approached the subject with the indirectness which had become an instinct with her. She was rather afraid of Ida, in the way in which talkative and insincere people are afraid of sincere and silent people. She regarded the girl as her creation, taking credit to herself, not only for her prospects, but for her "style," and almost for her beauty; yet she stood in a kind of awe of her, and was never so insincere with her, or with others in her presence, as was her wont.

Ida, on her side, did not see through Mrs. Tuck at all, as that good lady feared. Her cold, undemonstrative, and seemingly critical manner was mere manner, and really hid a warmth and depth of heart, and especially of affection for Mrs. Tuck, which the latter hardly suspected. A year since, indeed, when Mrs. Tuck was dangerously ill for six weeks, Ida had the chance, of which she made the most, of expressing her love and gratitude. She would allow no one else to nurse the patient, and no one else could have nursed her with such tender and untiring devotion. In fact, she nursed Mrs. Tuck as she had been used to nurse her mother, and as a mother would nurse her sick child, with an utter self-forgetfulness, and in a soothing, coaxing, petting way that might have moved Mrs. Tuck to laughter if it had not moved her to tears. For the kind-hearted woman was immensely surprised and touched by the motherly devotion of the girl; and this devotion made an important practical change in Mrs. Tuck's plans—a change which we are in order in mentioning here. She had meant the heiress for one of her own needy kindred—a gentleman who, in her opinion, had all the virtues except that of a fortune or of a title. But with Mrs. Tuck a fortune or a title outweighed all other virtues, and with these, therefore, Ida was to be rewarded for her devotion to her benefactress in her illness, and the needy Admirable Crichton was sacrificed with a sigh. It is true Mrs. Tuck thought something of her own interests in the matter, of the reflected glory she would enjoy from such an alliance; but

she was thinking most of Ida's apotheosis. "Sic itur ad astra." Nevertheless, here was the infatuated girl turning her back upon the path of glory.

"I think everything went well, Ida," making for her object as a hawk for its quarry, by wheeling round above it in narrowing circles before it drops upon it.

"Yes," said Ida absently.

"I couldn't get partners for everybody, you know," in a querulously defensive tone, as though Ida were complaining of her neglect of duty in this respect. "There was that Miss Pratt, no one would dance with her a second time or a second round. Lord Ellerdale said she was 'too hard in the mouth.' He didn't find you 'hard in the mouth,' my dear. He danced with you often enough."

Ida was still silent, but not now absent. She looked encouragingly conscious.

"I think he enjoyed himself while he stayed, though he didn't stay long. Had he another engagement?"

"No—I don't know," stammered Ida.

"But didn't he make any excuse for going so soon when he bid you good-night, Ida?"

"He didn't bid me good-night."

"No? Most extraordinary! I thought I might have been out of the way, attending to my poor dear husband, and that he must have made his excuses to you. Did he say nothing to you, dear, before he went?"

Ida was still silent. She felt it to be her duty to tell the whole affair to Mrs. Tuck, but at the same time she had to struggle at once against her natural reserve, and against a sense that she had no right to part with a secret in which others had a greater share than herself.

"My dear," resumed Mrs. Tuck, reading the girl's distressed face—"my dear, I don't want to pry into your secrets—it isn't as if I were your mother, or had any claim on you, though I can't help feeling like a mother towards you."

This was the right chord, as Mrs. Tuck well knew.

"You've been a mother to me, Mrs. Tuck, and there are no secrets of my own that I would keep from you; but there are others—not that you would mention it again."

"Is it likely?" burst in Mrs. Tuck, not angry, but grieved.

Well, it was likely, but Ida did not think so, and therefore she told the whole affair to the excited, amazed, amused, and disappointed Mrs. Tuck.

"He must have found the other there," exclaimed she after she had recovered her breath.

"I'm afraid so."

"I should like to have seen the Don's face."

"The Don" was Mrs. Tuck's nickname for Mr. Seville-Sutton, though she had never before used it to Ida. Now it slipped out naturally and almost necessarily, as Mrs. Tuck tried to picture the Don discomposed—a feat not possible even to her lively imagination.

"Dear! he must have looked like an owl at a fire. But which were you going to accept, Ida?" recalling her riotous imagination with an effort to the serious side of the business; "Mr. Seville-Sutton?"

"I don't care in the least for him," with a shudder, whether caused by a chill after dancing, or by the presentation to her mind's eye of this icy suitor.

Mrs. Tuck rose to put a shawl round the girl's shoulders, saying, as she did so:

"You're so warm, child, you'll catch cold if you don't mind," and then, as she resumed her seat, she added the moral: "Love is like that, my dear; if you begin too warm, you're sure to catch cold afterwards. If I'd been as passionately in love with my poor dear husband as you girls think you ought to be, we should never have been as happy together as we have been—never. But I didn't let my feelings run away with me—I let him," she added with a laugh, the pun being irresistible.

"Did Mr. Tuck run away with you?" cried Ida, amazed, as well she might be. The idea of Mr. Tuck's so far forgetting himself—in all senses of the phrase—was not conceivable.

"He couldn't run away," said Mrs. Tuck, with unintentional truth, for in this, indeed, lay the secret of their union; "he was laid up at the time with a sprained ankle, but he persuaded me into a private marriage, my dear, and we've been very happy together."

"But he didn't marry you for your fortune?"

"Indeed then, my dear, he did not, for there was little of that same to fall in love with. Not that he'd have liked me the less," she continued, seeing the drift of the girl's thoughts, "if I had brought him a few thousand pounds. It's a fine thing for a girl, Ida, to owe the man she marries nothing."

"Not love even?"

"She doesn't owe that if she gives as much as she gets."

"No, not if there's no love lost between them," said Ida with some bitterness, "Mr. Seville-Sutton and I would be quits."

"Now, Ida, you know as well as I that neither Mr. Seville-Sutton or Lord Ellerdale would marry you merely for your prospects. Do you think either of them would marry Miss Pratt if she had three or four thousand pounds a year in prospect?"

"I know neither of them would think of me if I hadn't."

"I don't know that at all, my dear. I was watching Mr. Seville-Sutton this evening, when he thought no one was looking, and I'm sure the way he gazed at you——" leaving an eloquent aposiopesis which Ida filled in:

"Like an owl at a mouse," smiling as she used Mrs. Tuck's own description of Mr. Seville-Sutton. "Besides, if he did care for me I should owe him nothing, for I never could care for him."

Mrs. Tuck had learned to translate Ida's language into her own by changing every positive into a superlative and liberally supplying every bald sentence with intensive verbs, adverbs, and prepositions. Ida's protesting, "I never could care for him," was equivalent to most girls protesting, "I cannot endure him." So she fitted the other string to her bow.

"Well, my dear, there's Lord Ellerdale."

"I don't think there is, Mrs. Tuck."

"Nonsense, my dear; when he finds you've refused Mr. Seville-Sutton—if you must refuse him—he'll come back fast enough. A girl with your prospects——"

"Oh dear, I wish I'd no prospects!" an outburst of profanity, which coming from so reserved a girl took Mrs. Tuck's breath away.

"My dear Ida!"

"Well, Mrs. Tuck, I mean I should like to be sure I was chosen for myself and not for my prospects. Besides, I don't care for Lord Ellerdale either. If I married him I shouldn't be happy, and I shouldn't make him happy. He'd find only a death's head in the golden casket."

Mrs. Tuck sat up for another half-hour to persuade the obstinate girl that this shoe at least did not pinch, and could not pinch, but fitted to perfection.

LEGENDS OF THE SYNAGOGUE

AMONG the many superstitions of mediæval Judaism which survive in old-fashioned Jewish communities, one of the most inveterate is the belief that the

synagogue is a meeting-place for the dead as well as for the living. Your thoroughly orthodox and thoroughly conservative Jew—an individual common enough in Eastern Europe, and by no means so rare in England as many may imagine—is firmly convinced that the “shool,” as the house of worship is familiarly designated, is regularly frequented by the “meisim” or departed members of the congregation, who assemble there for the purpose of prayer and study, just as they did while alive. The notion, in all probability, dates from very ancient times, for a curious legend of the Medrash records how one of the rabbins of old tried to force his way into the cave of Macpelah—where the patriarchs are fabled to have had a synagogue of their own—but was stopped by Eliezer of Damascus, the steward of Abraham, who said his master was engaged in prayer, and could not, without danger, be disturbed. Be that, however, as it may, no orthodox Israelite under any circumstances ever enters or attempts to enter a synagogue, without giving three preliminary knocks at the door, in order to warn the dead of the approach of a living co-religionist, and thus afford them time to vanish ere anyone disturb them. Unlucky is he accounted who ventures to intrude without so doing; and thrice unlucky is he deemed, who should, peradventure, look with mortal eye upon the “meisim” or congregants from the grave.

This curious superstition has—as may be imagined—given rise to quite a crop of strange stories and weird legends. And, oddly enough, these are invariably connected with, or said to be connected with, certain practices of observant and orthodox Israelites. In Russia, Poland, and Galicia, for instance, no female ever enters a synagogue alone, and the gossips of the Juden-viertel, or Jewish quarter, explain the why and wherefore of this. They tell how, many, many years ago, the “Rabbetsen”—the chief rabbin’s wife, that is—of Sluczk, rose early one morning in autumn, and started for the synagogue before daybreak—as is the wont of all old-fashioned Jews—in order to attend the propitiatory services held during the week that intervenes between the new year and the Day of Atonement; how the wind blew out the candle in the lanthorn she carried; and how, on entering the synagogue, she was surprised to find the place lit up, and the men’s seats below filled with devout worshippers. And then, requiring a light,

she called to the attendant downstairs to bring her one; when, lo and behold! a hand was stretched up from beneath the gallery, a mysterious and ghostly hand, reaching forty feet up; and in this hand was the light for which she had asked. Two hours afterwards she was found by the living worshippers, who came later, insensible upon the floor. And to the end of her days, runs the tradition, she was blind, she who had inadvertently looked upon the dead. To this day, no Jewess enters a synagogue by herself. If alone when she reaches the “shool,” she remains outside until one of the male members of the congregation arrives. When he has passed in, then, and then alone, will she follow him into the sacred edifice.

Stranger even than the foregoing, is the legend of the Levite of Horoduo—a fantastic narrative carefully handed down from the middle ages. Late one dark winter’s night the Chief Rabbi of Horoduo had been sitting with his favourite pupil, young Eliah, the Levite, in the stuffy “Bes medrash,” or college adjoining the synagogue. It was time to cease study, and with many a blessing the disciple was dismissed. His way home lay past the house of prayer. As he went by, he noticed, with amazement, that the edifice was lighted up within. Instead of passing on with head averted, he went up close to the windows, as he should not have done, and peered in. The “shool” was full; cram full of worshippers, full of “meisim,” dead ones, congregants from the grave, all engaged in prayer. The reader’s platform was occupied by the precentor—just as among the living—and the Scroll of the Law was open on the reading-desk in front of him. As the Levite listened he heard the solemn monotone of the minister as he chaunted the portion of the week. Then, to his horror and astonishment, his own name was called, called to the reading of the Law, a summons no Jew dare disregard. Could he disobey the call? And yet, to enter at midnight alone among a congregation of the dead! He would consult his master. Rushing back to the college, he hastily recounted the circumstance to the rabbin. “Go in, my son,” was the advice of the teacher, “go in, and walk carefully along the aisle so that you touch none of the dead; ascend the platform, take your place by the reader’s side, recite the customary blessings, hear the portion for the Levite read, and then

depart carefully as before. But of one thing beware! Do not descend from the platform on the same side as you ascend. Go up by the stairs on the one hand, but go down by the steps on the other." Trembling with fear, the young man returned to the synagogue; trembling, he entered among the dead. Carefully he passed the "meisim" without touching them, ascended the reading-platform, recited the benediction, heard the portion of the Pentateuch read, repeated the second benediction, and then turned to descend. But, in his terror and haste, he forgot the master's injunctions. He went down on the same side as he ascended, and—fell dead upon the floor ere he reached the bottom. And to this day, just as it is customary to knock three times before entering a synagogue, out of regard for the dead who may be within, so is it customary never to look back into the house of prayer when leaving it, or passing by outside. An orthodox Israelite would no more look behind him when he has once passed the "shool" than glance back into a cemetery when coming from a funeral.

By far and away, though, the most remarkable of these curious "legends of the dead" is certainly that attaching to the Great Synagogue of Posen, one of the oldest synagogues in Northern Europe. It must first be explained that on the Day of Atonement—the most solemn of all holy days among the Jews—orthodox people are accustomed to wear, over their ordinary attire, their shrouds—the white linen garments in which they are some day to be buried. Further, it is the custom in all orthodox congregations throughout Europe for the worshippers who attend on this solemn occasion to cover their heads with their "talithim," or "praying-scarves," for with his head so covered, every Israelite, observant or not, is buried. Only in one synagogue do the members depart from this universal practice—in the "alt-shool" of Posen. Here this practice is prohibited. For upwards of three hundred years the worshippers have never covered their heads with their "talithim" as in other Jewish communities. And this is accounted for by the following legend:

In the last year of his rabbinate, the famed Rabbi Joseph the Godly, then Chief Rabbin of Posen, being old and infirm was led into the "alt-shool," or Old Synagogue, on the eve of the Day of Atonement. The hundreds of large wax candles, lit in memory of the dead, were ablaze, and the

congregation, all in snow-white shrouds, and with their "talithim" over their heads, rose as their chief entered. The reader took his place, and was just about to intone the opening prayer, "Kol-Nidre," when of a sudden he found that someone was standing by his side. Surprised, he looked round, and to his amazement discovered that the reading-platform, which should have been unoccupied, was tightly packed. Of a sudden, too, the worshippers became aware that they were being inconveniently crowded. They tried to turn, but in vain. There was no moving either to the right or to the left. Denser and denser grew the throng; the crush was intolerable, and it became almost impossible to breathe. Terrified, the congregation cried aloud to the rabbin, who, lifting his eyes from the prayer-book, upon which they had been intently fixed, gave one swift glance round, and saw that a multitude of dead—of "meisim"—were present, crowded there among the living, the dead also in their white grave-clothes, also with their praying-scarves over their heads, and therefore not to be distinguished from the living worshippers. High above the clamour of the people rose the voice of Rabbi Joseph. "Ye that are of the living, remove your talithim!" he exclaimed. In an instant this was done, and then were seen the dead, standing there among the living, and known by this, that their heads remained covered—for they dare not remove the "talith," or praying-scarf, in which they are enveloped when committed to the earth. "In the name of the Lord God of Israel," exclaimed the rabbin, "in the names of the Patriarchs, and in the names of your own ancestors, I adjure you to leave this house of prayer of the living, that we, who are alive, may worship unhindered here, even as you did in your times." Immediately the throng began to melt away, the crowd seemed to disperse, and in a few moments the synagogue was occupied only by its living congregants. In memory of this "terrible eve" of the Day of Atonement, the members of the Great Synagogue of Posen abstain to this very day from covering their heads with their praying-scarves on this solemn holiday.

Quite as strange in its way, as this notion about the assembling of the dead in the synagogues of the living, is the belief—to which the ultra-orthodox Jews of Eastern Europe cling with incredible tenacity—in the occult and necromantic powers of the "Baal-Shem," or "Masters of the Name,"

as they designate such rabbins as are popularly supposed to be acquainted with the "Ineffable Name" of the Creator, traditionally transmitted among the learned. This "sacred name," the "mystic name of ten letters," which King Solomon knew and had impressed upon his seal—and by virtue of which he was enabled to trap the Demon King Asmodeus, and bottle-up impudent djinns, and rebellious spirits—is held to confer upon its fortunate possessors the most formidable powers. They can raise the dead, face demons and sprites, and have command generally over disembodied souls. Of course, only Cabalists of profound learning and ascetic lives are supposed to be acquainted with the thaumaturgic name; and, as in the matter of the "meisim," this belief in the occult powers of the "Baal-Shem" has given rise to any number of marvellous stories carefully garnered by the "gossips of the Ghetto," and duly handed down from generation to generation. The Josephstadt of Prague—once the Judenstadt or Jewish quarter of the Bohemian capital—is a perfect storehouse of such curious legends, the most extraordinary of which are connected with the ancient synagogue there, the "Alt-neu Shool," and great mediæval rabbin, Rabbi Löw ben Bezaleel, some time Chief Rabbi of Prague, and everywhere known among his people as the "Hoch Rab Low," the "High Rabbi Löw."

The synagogue at Prague, the celebrated "Alt-neu" Synagogue, is, without exception, the oldest in Europe. It is said to have existed as it now stands in the tenth century, and there are tombstones in the Jewish cemetery dating back more than a thousand years. Its designation "alt-neu," or "old-new," synagogue, is peculiar, and local tradition affirms that it was so named because it was not built by the founders of the Prague community, but was discovered in situ, just as it now is. The legend, as popularly told, runs as follows:

Early in the tenth century a band of Israelites under the leadership of Rabbi Abraham, the "Baal-Shem," wandering through Bohemia, arrived at the site of what is now Prague. Here, they accidentally came across a Jewish cemetery, in which were a number of tombstones inscribed in Hebrew. Struck by the fact that their people must, at some time or other, have been settled in the vicinity, they resolved to locate themselves there, and so laid the foundation of the Joseph, or Judenstadt. One evening, but a short time after their

arrival, the Rabbi Abraham was sitting in the ancient Jewish cemetery. Immersed in thought, he had allowed the hour of evening prayer to pass. Hastily rising, he was about to leave the burial-ground when he found that someone was standing by his side, a man evidently in the white garments of the dead, his head enveloped in his praying-scarf. And then, too, the rabbin became aware that he was surrounded by such figures; the cemetery was full of them. As he looked, they began to move off, in slow, solemn procession, towards a hill in the distance. As the last of the white-robed figures was passing out through the ruined gateway, it turned, and, raising its hand, beckoned to the rabbin. Without an instant's hesitation he followed. The hill was soon reached, but as the shrouded shadows arrived at a certain rocky projection in the hill-side, they disappeared; seemingly melting away into the solid earth. Ere the last figure in the procession vanished, it again turned, and again beckoned to the rabbin to follow. But he could find no door, no passage, and no signs of any. Hurling himself then, with all his strength against the rocky ground, he pronounced aloud the "ineffable name"—of which he was a master—and instantly an opening showed itself. He entered, and discovered that he was in a narrow passage, at one extremity of which he detected the glimmer of a light. For this he made. A few steps, and he stood in the interior of an immense stone-built synagogue, of massive construction and noble proportions. A large iron chandelier hung from the roof, and the "perpetual light" in front of the ark burnt brightly. But the edifice was untenanted; not a soul, living or dead, was there. For a few moments the rabbin paused, bending reverently in prayer; then, retracing his steps, he traversed again the passage by which he had entered, and emerged into the open air. As he did so the hill-side closed behind him, leaving no trace of an opening. Returning to his brethren, the Rabbi Abraham suggested, in a few days, the building of a house of prayer on the hill-side adjoining the ancient Jewish cemetery. Under his superintendence, they began to dig the foundations at the very spot where he had seen the white-robed figures from the burial-ground disappear. In a short time the hidden passage was discovered by the workmen, and, ere many weeks were over, the ancient synagogue, new yet old, was disinterred from the

mound under which for centuries it had been buried. In this way, it came to be designated the Alt-neu Shool, the old-new synagogue—a designation by which it continues to be known throughout the length and breadth of orthodox Judaism.

But if—as this story sets forth—the Alt-neu Synagogue of Prague owes its discovery to one “Baal-Shem” of local fame, so, according to popular legend, was it brought perilously nigh destruction by reason of the imprudence—not to say carelessness—of another renowned cabalist and thaumaturg, the High Rabbi Löw before-mentioned.

Tradition has it that this Rabbi Löw was a cabalist of transcendent powers. He is said to have been taught the occult art by a certain Don Abraham, of Saragossa, who came twice a week from Spain to instruct his friend and disciple, and who contrived to do the trifling distance from the Ebro to the Moldan in about sixty seconds—by supernatural means, of course. Rabbi Löw’s indoctrination into “Practical Cabala” was more than ordinarily fruitful of results. Although his house—which is still in existence in the Breite Gasse—was of modest proportions and his income limited, he always found his guests and disciples a room as large as the great hall of the “Hradchin,” and provided meals for them on a most sumptuous scale. But, above all and everything, he was a necromancer of unparalleled powers, and, it would appear, of unparalleled audacity.

It so happened that the Emperor Rudolph was extremely well-disposed towards Rabbi Löw, and frequently invited him to the imperial residence. On one occasion the emperor requested the rabbin to give him a specimen of his necromantic powers, and no ordinary specimen either, since the monarch wished to see the twelve patriarchs, the sons of Jacob, as they lived and moved. Rabbi Löw at first demurred. The emperor, however, insisted, and finally the rabbin agreed to raise from the dead the twelve sons of Israel, but on one condition—whatever the emperor might see, whatever he might hear, no matter how strange, no matter how surprising, he was to remain silent, not a word, not an exclamation was to escape him.

At midnight emperor and rabbin stood together in the Alt-neu Synagogue in darkness and in silence. Rabbi Löw, his phylacteries bound upon his forehead and left arm, his praying-scarf over his head,

and the “Zohar,” or text-book of Cabala, in his hand, was in front of the ark. By his side stood the sovereign. A single word came from the lips of the rabbin, and suddenly the wall upon which they were both gazing seemed to melt away, and Rudolph saw before him a vast open space dimly illumined. As suddenly, four majestic figures, the figures of Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, rose up as from the earth, and passed into the distance. As Judah moved away, he roared as with the voice of a lion, until the very walls shook. But the emperor remained unmoved. Then appeared four other sons of Jacob, Isaacher, whose tread shook the solid ground under foot, Zebulun and Benjamin, with a beauty “surpassing that of women,” and Dan, one-eyed and of gruesome aspect. Still the emperor was unmoved, and the silence remained unbroken. But then came Naphtali alone, and when Rudolph beheld him running—as rabbinical legend says he could run—over the top of the standing corn, so swiftly and so lightly that the stalks kept erect, and the swelling ears never even bent beneath his weight, he could not refrain from an exclamation of wonder. As the sound imprudently escaped his lips, a crash as of thunder resounded through the building, the ground under his feet opened as if to engulf him, and the wall in front began to bend inward, as though to fall upon and crush him. Quickly Rabbi Löw threw his arms round the emperor, and pronouncing the “ineffable name” of the Creator, succeeded in stilling the unnatural commotion, and saving his companion from destruction. But, with all his power, Rabbi Löw could not restore things precisely as they had been. The wall that had bent forward as though to crush them, remained so, bending and tottering. And there it may be seen to this very day, at the farther end of the Alt-neu Synagogue, bending and bulging in a very threatening manner, seemingly on the point of falling in, a standing memento of the Emperor Rudolph’s imprudence, and the daring necromantic experiment of the High Rabbi Löw.

But this was not the only occasion upon which the synagogue was endangered owing to the cabalistic pranks of Rabbi Löw. Inside the building, and to the left of the sanctuary, there is a pillar—one of some dozen that support the gallery and roof—cracked from top to bottom, riven as if by lightning, and sinking, apparently,

under the weight imposed upon it. For this half-broken and shaky column tradition holds Rabbi Löwe ben Bezaleel directly responsible. Legend has it that among his many magical possessions—and he had quite a variety—the most remarkable was the “golem,” an automaton figure, constructed or formed of clay, and to which he is said to have been able to impart life by simply placing under its tongue a “kemea,” or charm, which was an exact facsimile of the Shem Hamforesh, or “Sacred Name,” engraved on the seal of King Solomon. For many years this golem proved an invaluable servant. It appears, however, that one of the terms upon which Rabbi Löw was enabled to exercise supernatural power was the strict observance of the Sabbath. And hence it was his duty always to withdraw the kemea from the mouth of the golem before sunset on Friday. One Friday evening this duty escaped his memory, and he started for the synagogue without releasing his familiar. The golem immediately became alive and furious. It swelled to a gigantic size, stalked through the Ghetto, spreading death and devastation by its mere glance, and broke into the Alt-neu Synagogue. The service was just commencing, but fortunately the Sabbath had not been “made in.” The golem rushed towards the ark, grasping with its enormous hands the pillar on the left, as if to wrench it from its foundation and bring down roof and gallery upon the heads of the worshippers. Just then Rabbi Löw darted forward and wrested the kemea from beneath the tongue of the living automaton. The figure quivered for an instant, and then fell to the ground in a thousand atoms. But even as it loosened its grasp, the golem shook the column from capital to base, rending it from top to bottom, and leaving it cracked and broken as it now stands.

Most of the older synagogues of Europe are, it may be noted, the scenes of similar strange and fantastic stories. The Rhine districts — Mayence, Speyer, Worms, Bacharach—is especially rich in Jewish legends that survive from mediæval times. Many of these, too, are actually connected with portions of the Jewish ritual. The story of Rabbi Amnon, of Mayence, is a typical instance of this. On the New Year's Day, German Jews are accustomed to intone a very solemn prayer known as the “Unsané

tokéf,” from its commencing words, which read: “Let us dwell upon the sanctity of this day.” The prayer itself forms no part of the ancient Jewish ritual, and the Jews of Southern Europe are unacquainted with it. The Rhine legend ascribes its origin to Amnon, Chief Rabbi of Mayence, who flourished in the eleventh century. He enjoyed in a high degree the favour of the then Palatine Bishop of Mayence, and excited thereby the envy of the courtiers. To effect his ruin, they insidiously represented to the dignitary of the Church how desirable it was that, as a bishop, he should with the rite of baptism impart to his favourite the greatest blessing in his power. For a time the cleric avoided the snare laid for his Jewish friend. But certain hints about his zeal for the Church being called in question, induced him, at length, to send for Rabbi Amnon, and urge him to leave the faith of his fathers. The rabbin asked for three days to consider the matter. He had, however, no sooner quitted the presence of his patron, than he was overwhelmed with remorse at having hesitated, even for an instant; and he resolved, at any risk, to go no more to the episcopal palace. The third day came—the day upon which he was to answer the proposal. It was the New Year, and Rabbi Amnon, of course, attended the solemn service held in the synagogue. In the midst of prayers came a message from the bishop, requesting the rabbin's attendance. He refused to leave. Again came a message, more peremptory, and again the rabbin refused to obey. A third message came, and with it a file of soldiers to enforce obedience. Seizing the Jew, they bound him, and so carried him to the palace. Incensed at his stubborn resistance, the bishop ordered the rabbin's arms and legs to be lopped off; and thus mutilated, he was taken back to the synagogue. Here, wounded and bleeding, he requested to be laid in front of the sanctuary in which the Scrolls of the Law are deposited. The curtain was drawn on one side, and he was placed in the apse, where, in the pause that ensued, he, with his dying breath, commenced the prayer before-mentioned, which concludes with the words: “Penance, prayer, and alms avert the evil decree.” As he muttered the last sentence the curtain, it is said, was pulled across the apse by invisible hands; and when—the legend runs—the congregation rushed forward to see what had happened, Rabbi Amnon's body was

not to be found. It had disappeared, only a few blood-stains marking the spot where it had rested. The prayer he extemporised has ever since formed an integral portion of the ritual of the German Jews; and in the synagogue at Mayence—where Rabbi Amnon's seat is still shown—the curtain in front of the ark is drawn during the recitation of the words, just as on the occasion when the martyr rabbin with his dying breath is said to have first given utterance to them.

But there are more legends associated with portions of the Jewish ritual than the majority of Jews themselves wot of. Of the hundreds of thousands who annually read through the New Year's service, how few know that one of the prayers recited on that day is held to commemorate the fact of there having been a Jewish "Pope of Rome"—according to tradition he was burnt at the stake—while another has reference to the half-historic, half-legendary narrative, known as the "Dance to Death."

FORBIDDEN.

Oh, weary feet that on Life's stony ways
Must tread in separate paths; while Time's dark wings
Beat out the lagging hours of all the days,
Marking the epochs of their wandering!
Oh, lonely road! O tired, pacing feet
That may not meet!

Oh, longing hands that may not, must not, clasp
Those other loved ones in this world's wide night;
Oh, parted hands that may not, must not, grasp
Those other hands with yearnings infinite!
Oh, starving lips, whose hunger is but this—
They may not kiss.

Oh, aching eyes that shine so far apart,
Love-haunted eyes that may not, must not, tell
The secret of the passion-laden heart,
The whispered secret that they know so well!
Oh, hopeless love, that hope of death survives
In such cleft lives!

Oh, souls that never while the world rolls on
Shall mingle in a speechless ecstasy!
Oh, love that lives on hours long dead and gone—
Bound love that strives so vainly to be free!
Oh, joy of life that cometh all too late!
Oh, cruel fate!

CHRONICLES OF ENGLISH — COUNTIES.

DERBYSHIRE.

NEAR the junction of the rivers Swale and Trent, at a point where three counties meet, in the midst of fertile river-meadows, stands an important railway centre, which, for want of any village or hamlet near at hand to lend it a name, has assumed that of Trent Junction. In origin a settlement of railway-porters and refreshment-room

maids, this three-cornered morsel of railway territory has developed a good deal of activity round about. The osier-beds which gave the riverside village of Sawley its title, may still be traced, but the village has rapidly increased within the last few years, and wheel works and carriage-works have taken the place of the old basket-making industry. A few miles higher up the river a handsome bridge bears the name of Cavendish Bridge, after a former Duke of Devonshire—if territorial titles had any meaning, more properly Duke of Derbyshire. And this bridge, with the adjacent railway centre, may remind us that in the county we are now entering the influence of the great territorial house is rivalled by that of the Midland Railway Company, the one the growth of the present century, while the other dates from Elizabethan days, and traces the growth of its high fortunes to the genius and policy of Countess Bess of building memory.

Before the existence of Cavendish Bridge, or of the more modern railway junction, the main traffic from the south crossed the Trent by Swarkestone Bridge, about which, as about most ancient bridges, local folk-lore has been busy. Tradition has it that the bridge was built by two maiden sisters, figures of dim antiquity, dressed in the modern garb of rich old spinsters. And when a man snores in his sleep, he is said, in local parlance, to be driving his pigs over Swarkestone Bridge. Higher up the river again, lies Repton, the ancient capital of the Saxon kingdom of Mercia, with little to show of the great abbey and nunnery, coeval with the conversion of the Mercians to Christianity, and its tombs of early Saxon kings; nor even of the Norman priory that was built upon the site. The early nunnery was destroyed by the Danes, and surely it was a descendant of that iconoclastic race who, in the first year of Mary's reign, utterly destroyed the buildings of the priory. "He would destroy the nest for fear the birds should build there again." In the place of the ancient priory, however, we have a well-endowed and flourishing grammar-school, some of the foundations of which seem to have belonged to the ancient religious house.

From Swarkestone Bridge to Derby town is no long march, although perhaps rather a dreary one, through a thinly-populated woldy kind of country. But, reaching the vale of the Derwent (which, below Derby, spreads widely into its sister valley of the

Trent), you see at once how this upland town, lying at the head of wide and abundant pasture-lands, should have become the chief settlement of a pastoral race; for Derby is, undoubtedly, the chief town of the Danelagh; it is the only one of our provincial capitals which bears a distinctly Danish name. The swift descent of the river-bed towards the plain gave water-power to many water-mills. In the time of the Confessor, Derby had fourteen of these—a goodly number in a non-mechanical age—with two hundred and forty-three burgesses, who, with their dependents and servants, formed a main portion of the northern Fyrd, or army, which marched with Earl Edwin to meet the Norwegians and Harold's treacherous brother. Derby, probably, lost half its inhabitants in fighting Tostig, and at fatal Senlac, where they died with their honoured Harold, a man of their own race and blood. Thus at the time of the Domesday record there were only a hundred burgesses left of full age, and only ten corn-mills were grinding grist. At the Conquest, perhaps with the view of strengthening the depleted town, Litchurch, an adjoining hamlet, was added to Derby; a matter of no great consequence at the time, perhaps, but which was destined, some eight hundred years after, to have a considerable influence on the prosperity of the town; for the Midland Railway making its headquarters at Derby, built its stations and offices upon the level ground of Litchurch, to the great economic benefit of the municipality.

Otherwise, the general history of the town is not of an exciting nature. The privileges of the borough were first confirmed by a charter from Henry Beauclerc, and from the reign of Richard the First no Jews were allowed to reside there. With the revival of civic and municipal life in the thirteenth century, Derby got from King John a more comprehensive charter, according the burgesses the same privileges as those of Nottingham. And from that date, Derby, happy in being a plain burgher settlement without any royal castle or exacting overlord, pursued the even tenor of its way without any history to speak of. According to tradition, some time in the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries All Saints' Tower was built at the expense of the young men and maids of the town, which, if really a fact, bespeaks a rare amount of pocket-money allotted to the young people of those days. In All Saints' Church lies our old friend

Bess of Hardwick in a fine sculptured tomb with many of the Cavendishes, her descendants, around her; but the body of the church is much more recent, with an appearance suggestive of an old-fashioned London church, the suggestiveness being accounted for when we learn that it was built by the architect of Saint Martin's-in-the-Fields. In the seventeenth century the plague raged terribly in the town, having been brought there from London, it is said, by some Yorkshire clothiers. The country people, in dread of the visitation, refrained from bringing in provisions, and those who escaped the plague were in danger of being starved, till it was arranged that provisions should be exchanged against money without buyers and sellers coming in contact with each other. The exchange was effected upon a stone at the entrance to the town, called the Headless Cross; the country people approaching cautiously with tobacco in their mouths, and carefully fumigating the coin before they dropped it in their pouches. Apropos of the tobacco, it is recorded by the historian of Derby that the plague never touched tobacconist, tanner, or shoemaker.

During centuries of quiet prosperity the martial and royal spirit of the men of Derby had not altogether died out, and when Charles the First set up his standard at Nottingham, about twenty Derby men marched there and entered the royal service. But two centuries later, in the consternation caused by the apparently victorious march of the Young Pretender, seven hundred and fifty men were raised and armed to defend the town, who, however, were withdrawn at the approach of the Highlanders, and do not seem to have fired a shot in earnest.

The peaceful citizens of Derby no doubt felt much relieved when their defenders marched off, and the prospect of a hand-to-hand fight in street and market-place was avoided. But they awaited with a good deal of trepidation the arrival of the Prince Pretender's advance-guard, which appeared at eleven o'clock in the morning in the shape of two troopers, who rode up to The George Inn and demanded billets for nine thousand men. Soon after came thirty more in the same uniform—blue with scarlet waistcoat and gold lace—commanded by Lord Balmerino, and these drew up in the market-place till three o'clock, when Lord Elcho arrived with a hundred and fifty horsemen, the rest of the corps,

being the prince's lifeguard—fine figures and well dressed, but with jaded horses. The body of the army soon followed, marching six or eight abreast—a motley crowd, greybeards and striplings in the ranks together, and all mud-stained and weary-looking. The Jacobite officers levied a contribution of some two thousand five hundred pounds upon the town, and, as the Derby folk had just subscribed a similar sum for the existing powers, the fact is a testimony to the wealth and substance of the town. The prince's men beat up for volunteers, offering five shillings advance, and five guineas payable on reaching London, but only three men joined, and these worthless, dissipated fellows, of whom their new comrades themselves were ashamed.

This pitiful result in the way of recruiting seems to have given the coup de grâce to the last hopes of the prince's party. They had advanced through the half of England supposed to be the most devoted to the cause of the Stuarts, and not one man of note had joined them, and only a few score of tatterdemalion recruits. And yet it seems that preparations were made to march onwards, and the advance-guard reached the Trent at Swarkestone Bridge.

And here, upon this long, many-arched bridge, that stretches over the sunny and silver Trent and far beyond over the low-lying grounds so often covered by winter floods, here the little army of horsemen came to a halt. The way before them to London was clear and fair, with populous villages and towns all along the route. In another week they might have mounted guard at St. James's Palace, while the Tower guns thundered for the coronation of King Edward the Seventh. But the trumpets sounded the recall, and the troop wheeled round to begin the painful and disastrous retreat which ended on Culloden Moor.

With the disappearance of the Jacobites ended the age of adventure and romance. A few years after, in 1750, we hear of the establishment of the porcelain manufactory by the ingenious Mr. Duesbury, and the Derby china soon became noted. In 1777 Dr. Johnson remarked that the china was beautiful but so dear that he could have silver vessels as cheap. Then, in 1780, when the old Chelsea establishment was broken up, the workmen and models were transferred to Derby. Eventually the Derby Pottery became famous for less fragile ware, and dinner-services and dessert-

services, of the well-known Crown Derby mark, are still in use in many old-fashioned families.

But Derby, although it has always kept up its ancient character as a place of mills and machinery, has never assumed that of a thorough-going manufacturing town. The town had silk mills long before Macclesfield, and it is said that a Derby man, one John Lombe, introduced the manufacture from Italy, quite against the will of the Italians, who used the greatest precautions to prevent the secret of their processes from escaping. But Lombe, by bribes to workmen and disguised visits to the silk factories, succeeded in mastering the mystery of the manufacture. He also induced several of the Italian workmen to accompany him to Derby, and aid him in setting up the new silk works. But it is said that Italian vengeance also followed Mr. Lombe in the shape of an Italian woman, supposed to have been an emissary of the enemy, who is thought to have poisoned him. Anyhow, the man died suddenly, and the Italian lady disappeared, leaving no evidence, however, to connect her with the catastrophe.

A more successful industrial pioneer was Jedediah Strutt, born in 1726, near Alfreton, where his father was a farmer and maltster. Jedediah invented or adapted a machine for making ribbed stockings, upon which he rose to fame and fortune. Later on he became a partner with the well-known cotton-spinner, Arkwright, who finding the cotton-spinners of Lancashire too much inclined to burn down the new factories and smash the new machinery, set up his spindles and his throstles in a fine new mill near Derby. Arkwright and Strutt soon rose to commercial eminence, and helped to found the new aristocracy of wealth. A descendant of Jedediah was Joseph Strutt, the antiquary, whose novel of *Queenho Hall* is probably forgotten, but who is still an authority on ancient sports and pastimes. In 1856 a peerage was conferred upon the elder branch of the Strutts, with the title of Barons of Belper, and the name of Strutt of Belper is still well-known in connection with the cotton manufacture.

With the increase of wealth and population Derby becomes one of the provincial capitals of literary and scientific culture. And this centres mostly about the courtly, dignified presence of Erasmus Darwin, whose poem, *The Botanic Garden*, is now chiefly remembered for the really remark-

able prophecy it contains of the coming powers of the steam-engine, then only applied to mines and manufactories—a prophecy not yet entirely verified.

Soon shall thy arm, unconquered steam, afar
Drag the slow barge, and drive the rapid car;
Or on wide waving wings expanded bear
The flying chariot through the fields of air.

At Derby, the wise physician ended his days, and one of his last letters describes his pleasant home, The Priory, "with the garden, the ponds full of fish, the deep umbrageous valley, with the talkative stream running down it, and Derby tower in the distance." Here, too, Dr. Darwin founded the Philosophical Society, the model of many similar societies, which have played no inconsiderable part in implanting a love of scientific culture in the pushing, thriving communities of the north of England. The literary circle at Derby had its Reynolds in the native artist, Joseph Wright, the son of a solicitor in the town, whose portraits are highly prized by artists and collectors.

An earlier Derby worthy was John Flamsteed the astronomer, of whom, by the way, the local historian, Hutton, relates that he narrowly escaped the hangman's knot in his youth, having been convicted of highway robbery—probably in some boyish frolic akin to Shakespeare's deer-stealing exploit—but that he received a pardon from Charles the Second, who could hardly be hard upon youthful escapades. The pardon was found among the astronomer's papers at his death, and must rather have astonished his executors, who knew only the grave and serious man of science of later days—divine as well as astronomer, for he held the living of Burstow, Surrey.

Within the compass of a pleasant walk or drive from Derby lies Dale Abbey; a green, ivy-covered arch being almost the only relic of the once proud abbey. A homely tradition connects the foundation of the abbey with an enthusiastic baker of Derby, who left his ovens, one day, driven by an overmastering impulse to seek religious tranquility in some lonely retreat. Passing a village-green, bewildered by the uncertainty of his quest, he heard a woman in a thrilling voice cry to her children, "Go, drive the cows to Deepdale!" and took the voice as in some way a supernatural indication, and so went to Deepdale, and lived there as a hermit. As time went on the fame of the hermit's sanctity drew other recluses

to the spot, and thus was formed the religious community. In this legend we probably have the origin of an earlier monastery than the later Norman abbey, which has left these scanty remains.

From Derby, road and rail alike follow the pleasant valley of the Derwent. To the left lies Kedleston Hall, the stately home of the Curzons, surrounded by its beautiful park. And Duffield is soon reached, where the name of Castle Orchard suggests the site of a former castle, which is all that is left to recall the memory of the De Ferrars, ancient earls of Derby, a title which has been extinct for ages, for the Stanleys, it may be observed, have nothing to do with Derbyshire, and take their title from the hundred of West Derby in Lancashire. Apropos of this title, by the way, and the correct pronunciation of it, whether my Lord Derby or my Lord Darby, it may be said that all the evidence is in favour of the former. Derby is Dearbi in Anglo-Saxon charters and on Anglo-Saxon coins; it is Derby in Domesday. The exquisites of the latter days of Elizabeth first began to write and pronounce Darbye, but in written documents the ancient and correct way of spelling soon reasserted itself, although the pronunciation has been perpetuated as a tradition of dandyism—or what we should perhaps call La-di-da-ism—to the present day.

As we approach Matlock we may borrow a description that perhaps will awaken a pleasant echo of youthful feelings among those who in early days derived literary nurture from Miss Edgeworth's books.

"Presently they entered a narrow but beautiful valley; a stream ran through it, and there were hills on each side, whose banks were covered to a great height with trees of the softest foliage, and of various shades of green. Above, high above the young feathery plantations, rose bare whitish rocks. Sometimes stretching in perpendicular smooth masses, sometimes broken in abrupt craggy summits, huge fragments of which had fallen into the river below. The river flowed tranquil and placid till, when opposed by these massy fragments, it foamed and frothed against their immovable sides, then separating, the waters whirled round them in different currents, and joining again the stream ran on its course, sparkling in the sunshine. The road now lying beside this river brought them soon to the pretty straggling village of Matlock."

This is from Harry and Lucy. What children read Harry and Lucy now? and yet to many not far advanced beyond middle life their first visit to Matlock will recall Harry with his portable barometer, and the more volatile and lovable Lucy.

There is a great change in the secluded village of other times, secluded still by Nature, but now often thronged like a fair by a host of summer visitants, while every sheltered slope is crowned by some hydropathic establishment. Beyond the regular tourist track lies a wild and dreary district dotted here and there with scattered lead-mines—mines which have been worked without interruption from the days when they paid tribute to Cæsar, and probably from still earlier times.

The ancient laws and customs of the mines are worth a little study, as, handed down from age to age, they bear traces of quite different influences from the feudal and aristocratic systems of the surrounding districts. In Wirksworth, for instance, the laws of the mines declare: "Tis lawful for all liege people of this nation to dig, delve, etc., and turn up all manner of ground, land, meadows, closes, etc., within the said wapentake; dwelling-houses, highways, orchards, and gardens excepted." And the law was no dead letter; any prospecting miner might follow the surface indications of a vein, like a huntsman his hounds, over any man's field or enclosure. And having settled where to dig his shaft, the miner had merely to scoop out a hole, and place there a small wooden cross, and that was in the language of the miners a good possession for him, and the miner was entitled to have two meers measured out to him by the Barmaster, and to work his mine unmolested. The Barmaster, indeed, was the only authority recognised by the miners, all civil processes must pass through his hands, and he alone was authorised to punish crime. Controlling the despotic powers of the Barmaster was the great court or Barrmote held twice a year at Eastertide and Michaelmas.

Two handsome pigs of lead, among others, marked with Roman stamps, are to be found among our native antiquities in the British Museum, which were discovered in the neighbourhood of Wirksworth and Matlock. These Roman pigs—the Derby miners would have called them pieces, two of which go to a pig—vary considerably in weight, and it is a curious fact that till within recent times so did all the pigs of metal sent away from the mines, accord-

ing to the distance of ultimate destination and difficulties of transport thereto. For instance, a piece, or half pig, for London, a long doleful portage on the backs of packhorses, weighed only one hundred and thirty-six pounds, while a piece for Hull, with water-carriage nearly all the way, weighed one hundred and sixty-eight pounds. For the sender paid all charges of conveyance, which he thus deducted from his pigs before he sent them to market. There is something pleasingly archaic in this survival, almost to our own day, of a relic of a time when weights and measures accommodated themselves to human convenience, and had not assumed the rigid fixity of a scientific age; when land was measured by the oxen's yoke and the power of the plough-team; and when the stadium was shorter or longer according to the difficulties of the way.

The mining region of Derbyshire extends to the very summit of the Peak, where William Peverel built his strong tower, and the title of Peverel of the Peak reminds us of Walter Scott's novel. But there have been no Peverels in Derbyshire since the reign of Henry the Second, when the second of the name, the grandson of the Conqueror, was accused of poisoning the popular Ranulph, Earl of Chester—the one whose fame was enshrined in popular ballads along with that of Robin Hood—so that most of his possessions escheated to the Crown, while the small portion that his daughter was allowed to inherit was carried by her marriage to a line of strangers. And the castle of the Peak, although counted one of the seven wonders of the Peak, is only a hill-tower that could never have been of great importance. The other wonders of the Peak are described in Latin verses by no less a philosopher than Hobbes of Malmesbury, who long lived among the Derbyshire hills as the guest and pensioner of the kindly Cavendishes. This little book of the great philosopher must have attained a good deal of popularity, for it reached a fifth edition in 1683, and is accompanied with an English version by a "Person of Quality," commencing:

On th' English Alps, where Darbie's peak doth
rise,
High up in Hills that emulate the Skies,
Doth Chatsworth by swift Derwin's channel stand,
Fam'd for its Pile, and Lord, for both are grand.

The pile thus described, the work of our friend, Bess of Hardwick, has been, however, replaced by one still more grand, abundantly described in many excellent

guide-books. Perhaps the most interesting part of modern Chatsworth is its gardens, with their magnificent conservatories, created almost, from an unsatisfactory chaos, by Sir Joseph Paxton. The late Duke of Devonshire's account of Sir Joseph is interesting. How the duke was looking out for a head-gardener, and visited the Horticultural Gardens at Chiswick, and was struck with the appearance of a young man busy nailing and training creepers—a new hand at eighteen shillings a week wages, “young and untried,” so said the prudent curator of the grounds. But the duke determined to try him; and with no munificent salary at first—twenty-five shillings a week—young Paxton began to build up the gardens of Chatsworth. The wealth of the Cavendishes was soon employed in building up the huge conservatories, in sending expeditions even to distant countries for rare and curious plants, while Paxton accompanied the duke in his visits to all the great capitals of Europe, and brought back ideas and information. And then one day Mr. Paxton, travelling up to London, joined the Holyhead mail at Crewe, and travelled up to town with some contractors interested in the much-talked-of building for the coming world's exhibition of 1851. Paxton sketched his notions of a great glass building upon the back of a newspaper, and from this sketch was elaborated the design of the wonderful glass palace in Hyde Park, and the structure that succeeded it at Sydenham.

Not far from Chatsworth, in the tributary valley of the Wye, lies Bakewell, a pleasant little town in the midst of charming scenery, with a fine church rich in monuments, the most ancient of which is one to Thomas de Wednesley, who was mortally wounded in the battle of Shrewsbury, fighting against the Percys; possibly one of those whom Hotspur describes as marching in the king's coats, and who fell before the sword of Douglas.

But the gem of the district is Haddon Hall, one of the finest of the old baronial halls still left to us—a fine quadrangular structure, mostly of the Tudor period, but with parts still more ancient. Here lived the Vernons in their pride, the greatest people in all the district round, but simple knights in the official hierarchy. The last of the Vernons, Sir George, was known as the King of the Peak, and that he sometimes stretched his regal powers a little is shown in the following story. A pedlar had

visited the hall one day, and had gone on his way, taking up his abode for the night in the cottage of a peasant. Nothing more was seen of him, but soon after a terror-stricken rustic came to seek the knight in his justice-room, and told his tale—how he had passed the peasant's cottage by night, and noticing a light in the window and hearing uncanny noises, he had crept up and looked in, and saw the body of the pedlar lying on the ground, and the peasant hacking off the head with his bill. A strict search was instituted, and the remains of the pedlar were discovered in a copse and brought to the hall, where Sir George commanded all his neighbours and servants to attend, and put them to the ordeal of touching the dead body one by one. The suspected man hung back till among the last. According to the popular belief, at the touch of the murderer, the wounds of the murdered man would begin to bleed afresh, and the conscience-stricken peasant, rather than undergo the ordeal, took to his heels and made for the woods. Then followed a chase in which the whole community took part, a hue and cry over fields and through plantations, till the fugitive was hunted down, when by Sir George's order he was hung to the nearest tree. Such rough justice as this, however, was an anachronism even in the reign of Elizabeth, and Sir George was called to account by the council, but seems to have made his peace without any heavy fine or forfeiture.

Between this and Buxton the county gives evidence of an ancient population which has left only the remains of its dead to tell its history. There are barrows and tumuli everywhere; some opened near Chelmaston disclosed circles of skeletons, with their heads turned to the centre. At Arborlow there is a fine stone circle, and the lonely Roman road, with the melancholy summit of Axedge in the background, seems to add to the eerie desolation of the scene. The Roman road leads direct to Buxton, which, time out of mind, has been the great health resort of the district. The ancient rite of the well-dressing, still kept up with the accompaniment of cheap trippers in thousands from every part of the manufacturing districts, carries the mind back to a simple Pagan worship which has left its echoes still in the hearts of simple peasants. And Buxton is, perhaps, the southernmost of the sociable gregarious watering-places of

which the type is not to be found reproduced south of the Trent.

Hathersage is another centre of Derbyshire folk-lore, in itself most interesting, with wild and romantic scenery, and a wealth of prehistoric remains. Here, according to tradition, Little John, the lieutenant of Robin Hood, lies buried, the grave, as marked out by head and foot stones, being at least nine feet long. That tradition has duly pointed out the last resting-place of some mighty man of old is probable enough, and why should we cast any doubt on his identity when popular faith is so strong upon the point?

Leaving the wild and beautiful valleys of the Peak district, we come to a still wild but more populous and manufacturing district that borders upon Sheffield—a region of coal and iron. Dronfield, Chesterfield, and Staveley are thriving industrial towns with no particular history about them, while Beauchief Abbey, that lies near Dronfield, has only a tower to show of its ancient glories. A little village, called Whittington, lying among the moors, contains a dwelling still called Revolution House, where met a trio of conspirators in 1688—Earl Danby, afterwards the Duke of Leeds, the Duke of Devonshire, and Sir John Darcy, son and heir of Conyers, Earl of Holderness—who there, it is said, settled the preliminaries of the landing of William of Orange and the establishment of the Protestant succession. Bolsover, which stands upon the summit of a limestone edge, is more picturesque in its ruin and decay than it ever was in its former magnificence. The house was built on the site of an ancient castle, in 1613, by Sir Charles Cavendish—a barrack, as it were, to hold a vast array of servants and retainers, but ugly and comfortless. A fine riding-house, still kept in repair, testifies to the love of horsemanship and the skill in the manège of these ancient Cavendishes. But the ruins of Bolsover now belong to the Duke of Rutland's estate, having, like Haddon Hall, been added thereto by fortunate marriages at one time or other.

Farther south lies Wingfield, with remains of the old manor-house of the Talbots, where Mary Queen of Scots was resident for some time under the charge of the Earl of Shrewsbury and Countess Bess. Here, as usual, she turned the heads of all the men in the neighbourhood, and Leonard Dacre, who lived close by, was one of the unfortunates who attempted her rescue. Dethicke, too, was close at hand,

and from Wingfield; no doubt, the charming queen threw her invisible net over the chivalrous Anthony Babington. The Babingtons were originally of Nottinghamshire, and the broad lands of Dethicke had been won, with the hand of the heiress, by an ancestor in the fifteenth century. Anno 1586, Anthony Babington was attainted of high treason for his share in the historic conspiracy which bears his name, and his enormous patrimony passing to his brother George, was by him wasted and dissipated.

THE MARRIAGE OF THE OCEANS.

It is well-nigh two hundred and thirty years since Sir Thomas Browne pointed out the "vulgar error" of the Cnidians in giving up the attempt to cut the Isthmus of Corinth. They were deterred, it is related, by the peremptory command of Apollo, who said that if it had been intended that the country should be an island it would have been made so at first. "But this, perhaps," says the learned doctor, "will not be thought a reasonable discouragement unto the activity of those spirits which endeavour to advantage Nature by Art, and upon good grounds to promote any part of the universe; nor will the ill-success of some be made a sufficient deterrement unto others, who know that many learned men affirm that islands were not from the beginning; that many have been made since by art; that some Isthmes have been cut through by the sea, and others cut by the spade; and, if policie would permit, that of Panama in America were most worthy the attempt, it being but few miles over, and would open a shorter cut unto the East Indies and China." Yet two centuries and a quarter elapsed after this was written before "policie would permit" to attempt what has been the dream of ages.

The first European to cross the Isthmus of Central America was the Spanish adventurer Vasco Nunez de Balboa. This was in 1513, some five or six years before Cortez,

When with eagle eyes
He stared at the Pacific, and his men
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

It matters little, however, who was the first, but this we know, that for many years the Spaniards were possessed with the idea of uniting the Atlantic with the Pacific. So infatuated were they, indeed, and so importunate for the aid of Philip

the Second, that he forbade all further reference to it on pain of death. A summary way of disposing of difficult questions, in harmony with the dark days of the Inquisition.

For nearly a century interest in the Darien Isthmus seems to have slumbered, only to be re-awakened by the magnificent scheming of William Paterson. The unhappy story of his attempt at colonising does not need to be retold; but it is worthy of noting now that he selected for his first settlement the very place which has been fixed on in our time to make a way for the waters of the Atlantic.

Within the present century the project has been taken up in turn by England, America, and France. It seemed to be taking definite form when, in 1850, a treaty was concluded between the United States and Great Britain for the political neutrality of a proposed canal.

Once more, however, the matter slept until revived again in 1870 by the conclusion of a treaty between the United States of America and the United States of Columbia with the same object. Still nothing really definite was done towards the work by either country. The French were actually doing more, for, in 1843, the whole line of route was inspected by two French engineers, who prepared an elaborate but impracticable plan. Louis Napoleon, it may here be said, had always a great fancy for the scheme, and when incarcerated in the Castle of Ham he drew up a formal proposal on the subject.

It was not, however, until 1876 that really serious energies were brought to bear on the matter. In that year, Lieutenant Wyse was sent by the French Geographical Society to survey the isthmus, to define a route, prepare a plan, negotiate with the Columbian Government, and to report. All this he did very thoroughly, while M. Ferdinand de Lesseps convoked an International Congress to formulate a scheme. This congress decided that the most practicable route had been demonstrated to be one sketched from the Gulf of Limon, at Colon, to the Bay of Panama.

This brings us to about the middle of 1879, when progress was once more arrested. The preliminary prospectus of the project was received with great disapproval in the United States, and such serious political opposition seemed to be threatened, that M. de Lesseps had to suspend financial operations in order to go over to the States himself. There his

energy and eloquence were not unrewarded, and he returned to Europe to complete his plans.

In November, 1880, was issued the prospectus of the Universal Inter-Oceanic Canal Company, asking for five hundred thousand subscriptions of five hundred francs each.

This prospectus stated that the cost of the canal from Limon to Panama would be five hundred million francs, and that the difference between the capital of the company and the outlay would be raised upon bonds secured upon eighty per cent. of the net profits, with interest at five per cent. during the period of construction. The time estimated for construction was eight years, and the profits were estimated to be eleven per cent. should the shipping annually using the canal amount to six million tons, paying dues at fifteen francs per ton. These estimates, of course, were keenly criticised. It has been repeatedly stated by experts that the final cost of the canal is likely to be nearer forty millions sterling, than twenty millions sterling, as M. de Lesseps calculates, and that the amount of shipping available to use it cannot come up to one-half of his estimate. The chief of the American Bureau of Statistics prepared and published a series of figures to prove that not more than one and a half to two millions of tons of shipping could be expected to use the canal annually, while other authorities estimated the probabilities as between two and three millions of tons. These differences are serious, but as all are only estimates at best, we are not concerned at present to deal with them. M. de Lesseps had faith in his own figures, and his countrymen had faith in him. The capital was subscribed, and the work was commenced early in 1881.

The Americans were not content, however, to leave the piercing of the isthmus in French hands, and, under the auspices of General Grant, was formulated a scheme for cutting a canal farther north through Nicaragua. This scheme fell through then, but has since, we believe, been revived in California, where a company is being formed, or attempted to be formed, for the purpose.

Concurrently, a Captain Eads published a plan for a ship-railway across the Tehuantepec Isthmus, which attracted a good deal of attention for its boldness and novelty. So far the public has not taken up this last project very warmly, but

Captain Eads is said to be actually at work surveying and preparing his route.

Since M. de Lesseps sent out his first cargo of experts and material, we, in this country, have practically lost sight of the matter. We knew that something was going on, but nobody knew exactly what; reports were conflicting, and everybody concluded that it was going to be such a long business at best, that it could well be forgotten for some years. But the recent receipt of a report from Mr. Chamberlaine, the British Consul at Panama, shows us that very material progress is being made, and it will be of interest to indicate briefly what is being done.

The headquarters of the Inter-Oceanic Company have been fixed at Panama, where a large building of two hundred apartments has been purchased at a cost of forty thousand pounds for the accommodation of the engineers and staff of the central administration. Including workmen, the entire staff employed by the company on April 1st last was six thousand four hundred and sixty-nine, and of the labourers the larger proportion were Jamaicans. In the Bay of Panama the company has quite a fleet of steam-launches and boats; on the island of Naos it has a meteorological station for observing and registering the tides, temperature, winds, etc.; and on the Island of Toboga it has established a sanatorium for those of its employes whose health gives way. But the conditions as to health of the large army of workers seems, according to Mr. Chamberlaine, to be better than was generally expected. He reports the cases of illness as 14.30 per cent, and says that of six thousand persons whom he closely watched, eight hundred and fifty fell ill, the mortality being equal to twenty-five per thousand per annum. This is to some extent reassuring, for the mortality during the construction of the Panama railway was frightful, there being a saying of grim significance that an Irishman lies buried under every sleeper. The unhealthiness of the isthmus was one of the greatest of the obstacles suggested in the way of the canal project, but by care or good fortune the obstacle is not proving so formidable as was feared.

The principle upon which the work is being conducted is to divide the line into sections, and to let the work of the separate sections to contractors. Thus the first section, which extends from Rio Grande, near the mouth of the Chagres River, to Pedro Miguel, has been let to the

Franco-American Trading Company, who, however, have not yet commenced work. Their task comprises the excavation of about three million eight hundred and sixteen thousand cubic metres of earth, and they are to complete this section within two years for two hundred and fifty thousand pounds. On the next section from Pedro Miguel to Paraiso, work is progressing rapidly with over four hundred labourers excavating and cutting the bed of the canal. From Paraiso the next section extends to Culebra, which is the highest level the canal will attain, and here a cutting three hundred and fifty feet deep has to be made through the mountain. Here the necessary machinery has already been erected, and some seven hundred men are at work. The contract, which involves the extraction of three million five hundred thousand cubic metres, is for four hundred and fifty thousand pounds. From this point to Emperador forms another section, in which great progress has been made—machinery erected, railroad constructed, and hills levelled. On this section six hundred and forty men are employed, and it is to be completed in three years for seven hundred and fifteen thousand pounds. After this come the sections of the Upper and Lower Obispo, in which the river of that name has to be cut in five different places. The heaviest part of the work in these sections is the construction of a railway to carry the earth and stone excavated to Gamboa, with which to build a dam between the Cerro Cruz and the Cerro Obispo. This will form a reservoir two thousand six hundred feet long, and one hundred feet high, capable of holding six hundred and sixty millions of cubic metres of water. The work on this section is so far advanced that the railway will soon be completed, and then the building of the reservoir will commence. The next section to Gorgona is being also actively prosecuted, and a connection has been formed between the line of the Panama railway and the works. At this stage the canal will cut the Chagres river five times. In the next section, extending to Matachin, some five hundred and eighty labourers are employed in cutting the bed of the canal, and blowing up roots and trunks of large trees with dynamite. After this, in the two sections of San Pablo and Bohio Solado, the canal cuts the Chagres river fifteen times again, and here work has only been in progress a few months, but already six hundred men are

employed preparing the way for the engineers to begin their levelling and scientific work in the dry season.

At Bohio Solado the most difficult part of the operations is passed, and two-thirds of the entire length of the canal. The remainder of the course to Colon—the Atlantic outlet—will be comparatively easy, consisting mainly of dredging on soft marshy soil. The headquarters at this end are at Gatun, and from there are directed the operations of three dredges, each capable of raising five thousand cubic metres per day.

At Colon, Mr. Chamberlaine says, a remarkable change has been wrought. Two years ago it was an insignificant town of three thousand inhabitants, with no accommodation for travellers. To-day it has over ten thousand inhabitants, and numerous hotels and places of entertainment. It has become a bustling place with large imports and a constant traffic. Here the company has erected a wharf at which vessels may discharge the stores and material for the works, and has reclaimed twenty acres of ground, and erected on them a platform and mole. On the platform, which is where will be the Atlantic entrance to the canal, have been built substantial warehouses, workshops, and residences for the officials. The mole and the platform form a breakwater for the shelter of vessels intending to enter the canal. A slipway has been constructed for the building and repairing of small craft. At the present time the company has two thousand eight hundred men employed at Colon, and its imports of material average about ten thousand tons per month.

From the foregoing rapid sketch it will be seen that Sir Thomas Browne's "few miles over" are long and wearisome, measured by the amount of labour, and skill, and money required to traverse them. Whether the canal will or will not be completed within eight years from its commencement, and whether or not the cost will exceed M. de Lesseps's and approach the English estimate, are questions for the future to decide. Meanwhile the maritime commerce of the world is constantly growing, and it would be rash to say that it will not grow up to the accommodation of the Panama Canal, as it has already surpassed that of the Suez Canal. To the political questions involved in the project we need not further refer than to say they are capable of solution.

As we see difficulties smoothed down and obstacles fall away before the indomitable energy of M. de Lesseps, and as we read the independent testimony of our countryman to the work which has been and is being done, we begin to feel ourselves within reach of the realisation of the dream of ages. One of the most magnificent schemes of our century is on the road to completion, and even old men may live to witness the imposing nuptials of the two great oceans of the world.

JENIFER.

BY ANNIE THOMAS (MRS. PENDER-CUDLIP).

CHAPTER XXXVI. AT LAST.

SIX weeks or so before the expiration of the probationary term, there fell another heavy trial upon poor Jenifer in the dangerous illness of her husband.

The grand ambition of his life had been to be rich—not for the sake of riches—not that he might be quoted as a wealthy man, or one to whom the "spending of a thousand up or down" was a mere nothing, but for the sake of procuring the sport, the pleasures, the luxuries, the excitements without which life seemed to him to be not worth living.

He had missed his own money-making mark early in life, when, instead of going into practice with his father, he had insisted on going into the army. He had (before the Effie days even) missed marrying an heiress who cruelly jilted him, and openly denounced him as a fortune-hunter. And his last stroke for Fortune's smiles, Jenifer and her probabilities of success, had turned out a fatally false one. The hopes he had built upon her success were bitter as Dead Sea fruits.

As soon as he was out of the sunshine of social life, that sunshine which can only be the permanent portion of those whose purses are always well filled, he grew gloomy, indifferent to his few remaining sources of enjoyment, bitter and distrustful of everyone, and sourly discontented.

The work of his clerkship was uncongenial to him. The business men by whom he found himself surrounded in his business life were uncongenial to him, yet he shrank from the society of his old friends, and took it for granted that they despised him on account of his position as heartily as he despised it.

With Whittler's death he gave up all hopes of ever being able to make Jenifer

into a money-making machine. And so his home-life had no happiness in it, for he always regarded his wife as one who had tricked and defrauded him by appearing to have remunerative talent when she had it not.

The result was that the disturbed, dissatisfied, lowered tone of his mind acted in time upon his body, and when a heavy cold assailed him, and feverish symptoms speedily set in, he had neither the strength nor the spirit to do battle against them.

They had left the furnished house in St. John's Wood now, and were in lodgings in a dismal crescent in the neighbourhood, where his strained nerves were tortured by barrel-organs by day, and the cries of every evil-dispositioned cat in the neighbourhood by night. The sun rarely shines in this favoured spot, and the odours that reach it from the adjoining canal are not those best in the world adapted to reinvigorate and refresh an ailing man with fastidious senses and tastes. However, here he had to live, poor fellow; and here, finally, after weeks of anxious, patient, hopeless nursing on Jenifer's part, he had to die.

Then his "own people," those who in their selfish prosperity had nearly forgotten him in his adversity, came, and almost reproached Jenifer with "not having managed better" than to let him get into such a state of health. His mother took comfort in the thought that the "boy was exactly like poor Harry, not a trace of the Rays in him," and then soothed her conscience for the neglect of her son when living, by offering to pay his funeral expenses.

"My advice to you, my dear," she said to Jenifer, as she dried her eyes in a cambric handkerchief, the price of which would have given "the boy" clothes for twelve months; "my advice to you, my dear, is to leave London, and go away to some small country town, where rent is cheap, and you can get singing-pupils. You really needn't waste your time any more by looking after your boy. Your mamma can have literally nothing to do but look after him, and it's clearly her duty to do it."

"His grandmother will not neglect her duty to my boy," Jenifer said.

"Very right; very right of her, indeed," the other grandmother said approvingly. "Now listen to me, Jenifer; you must not let this sad blow ruin your life, you must rise up and exert yourself. Why, if Dr. Edgecumb were taken to-morrow I should

not give way! I should still think it my duty to fulfil the social obligations Heaven has laid upon me; and you must do the same. You must go away into some quiet place, and make up your mind to work! By-and-by we will see what can be done for the dear boy. Of course he will have whatever your mamma has, when she dies."

"Ah, don't speak of my mother's death!" Jenifer cried out, shrinking away from her mother-in-law in a way that astonished that lady.

"My dear, it must come! We all know it must come," Mrs. Edgecumb said authoritatively.

The news of Captain Edgecumb's death reached Moor Royal at a most inopportune moment. Effie had just achieved her principal object of the moment, which was to receive an invitation to a ball at Admiralty House, Plymouth, to meet royalty. No such blissful opportunity might ever come again. In justice to herself she could not neglect it now. So she put Jenifer's telegram into the fire, and drove into Truro to order her dress.

Tidings of Captain Edgecumb's illness had reached Moor Royal before this, but they had not been of an alarming nature, and Effie trusted to chance keeping Hubert in the dark as to his brother-in-law's death until after the ball. Then she meant to call her best tact to her aid, tell him the sad news, and justify her temporary concealment of it by the success she had made at Admiralty House.

Jack had received a similar telegram, but as Hubert and Jack were not on speaking terms, no notification of the event reached Moor Royal from the Home Farm.

So no note of brotherly loving-kindness reached Jenifer from that brother Hubert who had once been her beau-ideal, her type of manly excellence, kindness, and courage.

Effie's dress was as lovely a thing as white satin, delicate gold thread, hand-embroidery, Mechlin lace, and the most perfect cut could make it. And Effie had all the success she desired, and far more than she deserved, at the ball.

But towards the end of it a great blow was dealt her. A man who had been in the same regiment with Captain Edgecumb at Exeter, desirous of being seen to be on speaking terms with the most attractive and most highly distinguished woman in

the room, came and spoke to her when she happened to be going to dance with her husband.

"This is very sad about poor Edgecumb, isn't it?" he said after a moment or two; and before she could answer he went on: "I hardly expected to see you here to-night."

"Why, what's sad?" Hubert asked quickly.

"You don't mean to say that you don't know he's dead?" the other man said, in tones of such evident surprise and distrust, that Hubert, after one glance at his wife's face, thought he had better take her away at once.

"I shall go to my sister to-morrow. The shock has been too great for her to think of anything," he said to Captain Edgecumb's old comrade. But when he was alone with his wife he said:

"You knew, Effie?"

"I couldn't give up the ball. I meant to tell you to-night," she stammered.

"You have made me appear a greater brute than I am in reality to my own sister," he sighed.

And that was his only reproof to Effie. The thought of the sensation she had made at the ball made her bear the reproof heroically.

Some way or other, when the morrow came, Hubert shrank from going to his sister. Poor Edgecumb had been dead several days now, and was probably buried by this time, and as Jenifer would have taken it for granted that they were away from home when her telegram arrived, and had never received it, there would be a certain painful awkwardness in explaining matters. Moreover, he really was not in circumstances just now to do anything for his sister and her boy. And if she was left in poverty, the sight of her would only wring his heart for nothing. So he did not go, and Effie was ashamed to write.

One Monday morning, about six weeks after Captain Edgecumb's death, Jenifer carried her little son into her mother's bedroom earlier than usual, and in answer to an enquiring look from Mrs. Ray, said:

"I am going out for the whole day, dear, and I want you to take care of Jack. Directly the post comes in I shall go off on my round, and try to beat up my former pupils, and get some new ones."

"You are not strong enough to teach yet, my child," Mrs. Ray protested.

"Not strong enough!" Jenifer reared

her slender, straight figure up more erectly. "Mother, where do you see signs of weakness in me?" she asked, laughing.

"None in body——"

"And none in mind either, I hope!"

"No; but your nerves haven't got over the shock," Mrs. Ray argued pityingly.

"Indeed they have, a look at Jack always steadies them," Jenifer said buoyantly. "I'm going to start early," she went on, "because I shall recommence my teaching career by walking, and saving omnibus fares. By-and-by, when I've made the long dreamt of competence, I'll cab it."

"There's the postman's knock; but as usual, I suppose, no letters for us," Mrs. Ray said with a little sigh.

And, indeed, it must be confessed that Mrs. Ray's sons apparently forgot that they had a mother, when they were absent from her.

But this day it happened that there was a letter for her, from Mr. Boldero.

"The time has arrived for the opening and reading of your late husband's latest will," he wrote. "The day fixed is next Thursday, the place in which it is to be read is the library at Moor Royal. All the family, Admiral Tullamore, and myself are to be present. I hope Mrs. Edgecumb and you will do me the honour to be my guests, instead of going to Moor Royal."

"Of course we must go; but, oh dear! what a trial it will be, to go and have just a glimpse of my old home, and see that I'm not wanted there," Mrs. Ray said, wiping away a few tears.

But Jenifer made her mother busy herself about Jack, and so cheered her.

The momentous day arrived. All the family, even Jack Ray and Minnie, were assembled in the library. Effie, arrayed in a sumptuous tea-gown of silver-grey plush, which she wore as a graceful compliment to the memory of Captain Edgecumb, and an air of gay indifference, lounged in one of the new peacock-blue velvet chairs which had succeeded the stately old library ones of golden-brown stamped leather and oak. Mrs. Ray sat regarding the changed aspect of everything with wistful eyes.

And Jenifer could hardly conceal her annoyance and contempt for Hubert, for the cool indifference he displayed towards his mother.

Then their father's latest will was read, and the aspect of all things underwent a sudden change.

Cleared of all legal veiling, it was to this clear effect :

Moor Royal, at the expiration of three years, was to remain Hubert's property on unchanged terms if, during those three years, he had shown real filial feeling and true manly consideration for his mother, charged merely with the payment of two hundred a year more to Mrs. Ray, which two hundred, together with what had been left to the widow under the former will, was to be settled on Jenifer at her mother's death.

But supposing Hubert had developed the "latent selfishness and extravagance" which his father had always detected in him, the property was to go, on the same conditions, to "my second son, John Ray. Provided, that is, that in all respects since my death, he has proved himself worthy to be trusted and has not married beneath him—a taste for low company being, I fear, his besetting sin." In the latter event the whole property was to be Mrs. Ray's, on condition that she left it to Jenifer.

No one could assume for an instant that any of the conditions had been fulfilled, and Hubert and Jack had the grace to accept their just reward in silence. But Effie, loudly protesting against the "disgusting injustice of the whole of the revolting family into which she had married," swept out of the room without a word to the lady who was now its mistress.

Then Hubert went up and kissed his mother, and whispered :

"I deserve it, dear. 'I have sinned before Heaven, and against thee, and am not worthy to be called thy son.'" And all her heart bled for him, and went out to him, and urged her to give him back Moor Royal on the spot.

But this the two executors would by no means allow. So in an hour or two Effie ordered Hubert off with her to join Flora, whose wit and wealth would surely, she thought, upset this iniquitous plot against her peace and plenty.

But when they were gone, Mr. Boldero went to Jenifer, and said :

"Now, you know why I have restrained myself?"

"I think I do ; it was because you would not ask me to be your wife till I knew as well as you did that I should be a rich woman?"

"You are right, Jenny dear."

"But you will ask me—one day?" she said, blushing a little, as she held her hand out to him—and remembered her recent bereavement.

"Please God I will," he said frankly.

At the end of a year he kept his promise. And when they were married, he said to her :

"Jenny, can you trust me to be a father to your boy, and a son to your mother?"

"Entirely."

"Then ask her to give back Moor Royal to Hubert. You will be a rich woman without it, my darling, and your mother will be happier with us than alone up there with thoughts of the son who has been punished for his faults to her. Even I can trust Hubert now."

So this latest programme was carried out. And there are no two happier women in England than Mrs. Ray and Jenifer; though Effie holds her fair head up scornfully when they are spoken of, and says :

"It's so unpleasant for me, you know, to have to visit a country lawyer and his wife. Jenifer ought to have known better than to put me in such a position, but she always was so selfish! Flora and I hate selfishness, and visiting any but county people."

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BY BASIL.

AUTHOR OF "LOVE THE DEER," ETC.

CHAPTER XVI. ESTRANGED.

MRS. TUCK, after her illness, took more care of herself. She committed the entire management of the household to Ida—whose housekeeping was the very perfection of neatness, economy, and comfort—and from being in other ways active and managing, or, we might say, even, meddling, she became suddenly indolent and apathetic. She breakfasted and read her letters in bed, and came down only when Ida, who from of old was an early riser, had got a good day's housekeeping work done.

Nevertheless, the morning after the ball, Mrs. Tuck put in an appearance before eleven o'clock, and this though she did not get to bed before five. Nor was this the sole or most surprising change in her. She had come round altogether to Ida's views as regards Mr. Seville-Sutton, and thought it right to be down early to-day to save the girl a painful interview with that gentleman in case he should call in the morning, as was just possible.

"I'm afraid he'll ask to see me, Mrs. Tuck."

"I don't think he will, dear." And then, after a pause, to get her thoughts into diplomatic order, she continued: "Ida, do you remember what you said last night about wishing you had a chance of being chosen for yourself, and not for your prospects? Well, my dear, I'm sorry to say I don't think your prospects are so settled and certain as I imagined. My poor dear husband has got so low about himself that he talks now of leaving half his money to charities. I've no patience with people, who can't bear to give away a penny in their lifetime, leaving their money to

charities, trying to take it with them in a circular-note to the next world." This with an asperity unusual from her, for Mr. Tuck was always trying in money matters, and had been exasperating this morning. "But there's no good in being grieved or angry about it. If he chooses to do it, he has a right to do it."

"I'm not grieved in the least, Mrs. Tuck," said Ida, whose brightened face showed that, as was usual with her, she had said rather less than more than she felt.

In fact, she was relieved at the prospect of being disembarassed of her interested suitors.

"I didn't think you would be, my dear, for now you'll have your own way, and that's worth thirty thousand pounds to a wilful girl. We shall soon know whether the Don will choose the leaden casket, for I shall take care to tell him of the change in your prospects before he commits himself."

Here was a sudden change in Mrs. Tuck—for it was plain enough that she was as dead against the Don this morning as she had been last night in his favour. A word to explain her conversion.

Ida's prospects were not a whit worse to-day than they were yesterday. It is true, Mr. Tuck had spoken that morning about leaving large sums to charities, but it was not the first nor the twentieth time that he had declared this intention, and Mrs. Tuck had complete confidence in her power to foil it. It was no change in Ida's prospects, then, that changed Mrs. Tuck. Nor was her conversion due wholly to her conviction that Ida's mind was made up unalterably against Lord Ellerdale and the Don, though this had something to do with it. But what mainly had to do with it was the following epistle, received that

morning from the afore-mentioned Admirable Crichton—a nephew of Mrs. Tuck's, Captain Richard Brabazon:

"Morrison's Hotel, Dublin.

"DEAR AUNT,—I mean to look you up next week, if I've to pawn my watch for it—not unlikely, unless my aunt robs my uncle of the pleasure of advancing a pony. I had to cut short my visit at Bunratty Castle (Lord Liffey's). Shooting good, but a trifle wild. You may judge, when they took me (!) for a landlord last Friday in broad day, but my horse reared at the flash, and they missed me. Faith, there won't be a landlord left in the country soon if they don't pass some kind of game law to preserve 'em. Lord Liffey is strictly preserved at present. He's all the lower doors and windows strongly lined with Peelers, who they say are as good as earth-works against ordinary bullets. But I couldn't stand the place any longer. It was as bad as being a king or a convict, having fellows in uniform always at your heels. The day before I left, Liffey wanted to show me the last grave they'd dug for him, not a stone's-throw from the back door, yet it took us ten minutes to get there; what with the reconnaissance in force, and then the muster in the hall, and then the funeral march to the grave, two Peelers in front of us, one at each side, and two behind. That finished me, and here I am. But, faith, I find this place too hot to hold me now, just because they won't take me for a landlord here, when it's billets in place of bullets that are flying. If you can't send me more than my travelling expenses, I shall have to get Blake to smuggle me through the duns and bailiffs, bad luck to them! You remember Ned Blake, don't you? He's a Land Leaguer now, and is doing well. He says he'll give me a certificate of character as an evicted tenant who shot a process-server, and then not a man in Ireland dare lay a finger on me. But I'd have to shave and have my head cropped, which wouldn't do for La Superba. Have you sold her yet? If not, let me know the figure, as there are one or two fellows here on the look-out for something of the sort. By the way, I shall probably be on sale myself when my watch is gone. 'Eighteen hands; warranted sound; temper like a lamb; will run in double harness. Just suit a lady.' You, my dear aunt, can have me in exchange for a pony, which I hope you'll send by return to your affectionate nephew,
DICK BRABAZON."

By-the-bye, it was this "pony" Mr. Tuck had been so nasty about as to provoke Mrs. Tuck's fling at those who so cling to their money as to try to take it with them in a circular-note to the next world. However, before the day was out she extracted the twenty-five pounds, and sent them to her beleaguered nephew.

To this young gentleman—as may be inferred from his letter—truth was as precious as gold to the gold-better. He made a little of it go a long way. He would take the merest film of truth and blow it out into the most light, lively, and iridescent soap-bubbles for the entertainment of himself and his friends.

Indeed, he had got so into the habit of mixing a grain of fact with a drachm of imagination, that he could hardly distinguish them himself a week after he had compounded them. And, as we have seen, it was a family failing, for Mrs. Tuck herself held truth too precious to be used extensively, unless as a wash or gilding.

Therefore she condoned this failing of his, or rather hardly regarded it as a blot upon his other perfections. For the rest, he was the most sociable man in the world. He not only could, but would make himself pleasant to any society in which he found himself, and though he would forget your very existence the moment your back was turned, you felt yourself, while with him, in the very centre of his thoughts and of his heart. Not that he was insincere. He really did feel kindly towards you until the next friend he met displaced you. His heart, in fact, was facile as the photographer's plate on which your image is taken vividly and instantaneously, but is rubbed off to make way for that of the next sitter.

This impressionability made him generosity itself. He would give to a beggar the very last shilling of his friend—the beggar being present, and the friend he beggared absent. And this charity was twice blessed, for he would borrow his friend's last shilling in so graceful and gracious a way, as to make the man imagine for the moment that a singular kindness had been done to him. No doubt when he got home, and felt in his empty pockets, he would come to think there must be some mistake somewhere until he met Dick again, and in his fascinating society found it was all right.

For the rest, we must say, in explanation of Dick's letter, and of Dick himself,

that he was an Anglo-Irishman. Englishmen in Ireland, it is said, become Hibernicis ipsis Hiberniores; but, to redress the balance, an Irish Tory is more English than the English in his politics, prejudices, and egotism. Now Dick was an Irish Tory of the Tories, and turned Queen's evidence against his countrymen, after the base manner of his kind, in order to escape being confounded with them in a common condemnation.

Dick's letter reached his aunt at a fortunate moment, when she was sure Ida would accept neither the Don nor Lord Ellerdale, and not at all sure that she would not, with her absurd ideas, fall into the hands of some adventurer. Probably the reader will not see how this fate was to be averted by her falling into Captain Brabazon's hands; but then the reader is not Dick's idolising aunt. She thought Dick as perfect as it is possible for a fallen creature born to frailty, unredeemed by rank or wealth, to be. Besides, the match had this merit in her eyes—it would take all her skill to bring it about. Dick and "La Superba," as he called Ida, had met before without taking Mrs. Tuck's view of each other, but Mrs. Tuck trusted to convert them by assuring Dick that Ida's three thousand a year was certain as Mr. Tuck's death, and by representing Dick and his suit to Ida as absolutely disinterested. Meantime she would keep the field clear of other suitors by spreading the report that Mr. Tuck would leave, certainly the great bulk of his fortune, and possibly the whole of it, to charities.

Therefore she hurried down this morning to clear the field of the Don, and through him to start the report of the precariousness of Ida's fortune. When the Don did call, late in the afternoon, he found Mrs. Tuck in the drawing-room, looking surprised to see him. After the Don had solemnly and favourably pronounced his opinions on the weather, the ball, and Mrs. Tuck's appearance thereafter, he proceeded in due course to enquire for Mr. Tuck.

"He's anything but well, Mr. Seville-Sutton, I am sorry to say. He's in a very low state both of mind and body," in a tone rather of annoyance than of grief, and then, after a slight pause, she resumed: "I'm sure you'll excuse me, Mr. Seville-Sutton, but as I know you're a warm supporter of all the county charities, I thought, perhaps, it was you who put this notion into my poor dear husband's head.

After all these years! Without a warning! So set upon it! Nothing I can say!" These disjointed sentences escaped from Mrs. Tuck as she held her handkerchief before her distressed face.

"May I ask what notion is this to which you refer, Mrs. Tuck?" stiffly.

"It's not for my own sake. I'm sure you'll do me the justice to believe that I'm not thinking of myself, but that poor dear girl always led to think, and every one else led to think, that she was to be his heiress, and now to turn round in a moment, it's cruel. But I cannot think you looked at it in this way, Mr. Seville-Sutton, or you would not have used the great influence you have over my poor dear husband to persuade him into such a—such a breach of trust, I may almost call it."

"What breach of trust? What do you mean, Mrs. Tuck?" not now stiffly at all, but in a sharp, short tone of alarm.

"These charities—this leaving nearly all his fortune to charities."

"To charities!" exclaimed the Don, half starting from his seat.

"Then it wasn't you at all, Mr. Seville-Sutton? I'm sure I beg your pardon, but I knew no one had so much influence with my poor dear husband as you. If you'd only use it, Mr. Seville-Sutton, to dissuade him. But it's no use; nothing will move him."

"Did you say the bulk of his fortune?" asked the Don, aghast.

"There's my little pittance. He can't touch that, and he must make some kind of provision for that poor child. But I've no right to trouble you with family matters, Mr. Seville-Sutton," checking herself, as though she had said more than was proper or prudent, and assuming a discreet and dignified reserve. "I was betrayed into speaking of them through thinking that only you, who have such influence over my poor dear husband, could have persuaded him into this. But I did you injustice, Mr. Seville-Sutton, and I hope you'll forgive me."

"Certainly, Mrs. Tuck, certainly; and I hope you'll believe that I'm sincerely sorry, most sincerely sorry, that Mr. Tuck has made this extraordinary, and—and I must call it—iniquitous change in his intentions."

"I'm sure you are," with an unquenchable twinkle in her eyes.

"And I owe you an apology, Mrs. Tuck, for intruding upon you at such a moment. Another day when you are more composed

I may do myself the honour to call upon you. Good-bye, Mrs. Tuck."

"Good-bye, Mr. Seville-Sutton. I need hardly ask you to say nothing of this matter, which my unjust suspicion betrayed me into mentioning."

"I regard the confidence as sacred, Mrs. Tuck. Don't move, pray. Thank you. Good-bye."

The Don almost hurried from the room and from the house at a pace which, for him, was indecorous, yet half stopped once or twice to exclaim mentally :

"What an escape ! What a narrow escape ! By Jove !"

When the footman asked him, as he was getting into his carriage, where they were to drive to, he answered, "To charities !" and was, in fact, thrown altogether on his beam-ends by the shock.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Tuck, feeling something of the triumph of a well-graced actress who had just taken the house by storm, sought out Ida to give her a much modified report of the interview. She led Ida to believe, without directly saying it, that she had incidentally disclosed Mr. Tuck's intentions to Mr. Seville-Sutton by asking the Don's advice as to the most deserving charities.

"He's a poor creature, my dear, and you're well quit of him. You should have seen him when he heard of it ! He looked like a mute at his own funeral, a touch of real feeling in his glum face at last. 'Allow me to assure you, madam, that I am beyond measure distressed at this most astonishing, and—you will pardon me for saying it—most iniquitous change in Mr. Tuck's intentions,' " mimicking to the life the Don's sepulchral voice and elephantine manner. Then, remembering with what fervour and frequency she had heretofore pleaded this gentleman's cause, she added : "You were right, my dear, and I was wrong. But who'd have thought that a man of his wealth would be so mercenary ?"

Ida was relieved, and, truth to tell, mortified also. She had been certain before that the Don cared only for her fortune, yet this cynical confirmation of her certainty was mortifying. And it was not the sole mortification in store for her.

Lord Ellerdale, upon being chaffed about Ida on the day after the ball, announced her engagement to Mr. Seville-Sutton, giving his authority, that of the Don himself. The news spread like wildfire, but was followed fast by the Don's contradiction given with an embarrassment which

was perplexing, until this news, in turn, was overtaken by that of the fall in Ida's fortunes, when all became clear.

Ida had been jilted by Mr. Seville-Sutton, on the Don's discovering that her prospects were all moonshine. There were at first a good many apocryphal versions of the manner of this discovery flying about ; but the one which finally fulfilled Vincentian conditions of canonicity—as that held everywhere, always, and by all—was this : that on the day after the ball Mr. Seville-Sutton insisted on seeing Mr. Tuck about settlements ; that he did see him notwithstanding all Mrs. Tuck's desperate endeavours to prevent him, and that then the truth came out, which was that Ida's prospects were a pure fiction of Mrs. Tuck's. Mr. Tuck had never for a moment meant to leave the girl more than five thousand pounds. Hereupon, of course, Mr. Seville-Sutton receded from his engagement, as anyone would who had been so ensnared ; ensnared not by Mrs. Tuck only, but by the girl herself ; for it was little likely that Miss Luard had not heard a thousand times of her true prospects from Mr. Tuck, who was given to talk over-much of money matters, and especially of money obligations. That "my poor dear husband" had herself spoken to more than one of Mr. Tuck's intention to leave the bulk of his fortune to charities did not at all make against this canonical version—made for it rather—since it was a mere confession of her despair of concealing the true state of the case any longer. Lastly and conclusively, this version had Mr. Seville-Sutton's imprimatur. At least, when it was discussed in his presence he admitted its accuracy by his silence. You see Mr. Seville-Sutton was so perfect a gentleman, that he could not break the silence he had pledged himself to Mrs. Tuck to keep. His gentlemanliness was as exquisite as his clothes, and went as deep.

This deplorable affair was canvassed by every lady, young and old, for miles round, with much sad shaking of the head and more rejoicing of the heart. Ida's reverse of fortune would set free a number of eligible young gentlemen, who had hitherto been her slaves. Besides, it was to be hoped that it would do the girl herself good. She had shown herself so haughty, heartless, and mercenary that the most Christian people—and Kingsford and its neighbourhood were full of most Christian people—spoke of the wretched affair with mixed feelings—hope

that it would do the girl good, fear that nothing would do her good, and pity for this utter overthrow of schemes which were laid so deep and which soared so high.

We could afford to despise the scandal of Kingsford if it affected only the minds or the lives of its inhabitants; but it affected also unfortunately the minds and lives of people with whom we have more concern—of Archie and of Ida. Archie heard at third hand from a friend of Lord Ellerdale, of Ida's engagement to Mr. Seville-Sutton (but not of the change in her prospects nor of that gentleman's having jilted her), and the news only confirmed his impression of her heartlessness. For what girl in the world would accept this tailor's lay figure for anything but his fortune?

As for Ida, with all her humility she never expected that she would lose so much consideration with the loss of her prospects. For having heard nothing of the story of her engagement to Mr. Seville-Sutton, she, of course, set down the sudden drop altogether to the loss of her prospects. And as every woman, or almost every one, thought it her duty to interpret to her the lesson of humility, not to say humiliation, read her by Providence, she felt very sore at heart, and as a consequence, very susceptible to such disinterested consideration as Captain Richard Brabazon was prepared to pay her.

This bitterness overflowed a week after the ball. She was one of a picnic-party at Bolton Abbey, and was left alone with Mrs. Tuck on a seat above the Strid which commanded a view of Barden Tower. It was quite a new thing for her to be left alone, and not as pleasant as she had pictured it to be. In truth the girl was feeling very desolate. She had been shunned, or thought she had been shunned; for the sudden change from the full blaze of popularity to twilight looked like night, and perhaps it was rather she that shrank away from the others than they who shrank from her.

Anyhow, she was feeling thoroughly wretched, and had left Mrs. Tuck for a few minutes, under the pretence of gathering wild-flowers, in order to enjoy her misery in silence. She had gone a few steps along the narrow and winding path leading to Barden Tower, when, at a sharp turn, she came face to face with the very person then in her thoughts. She was almost startled into exclaiming, "Archie!" when his exclamation, "Miss Luard!" in a tone not glad, or cordial even, but only surprised, froze the old name on her lips. If this

one word "Archie" had escaped her it would have made all the difference in the world in both their lives. But Archie's tone would have frozen the genial current of a much more gushing soul than Ida's.

In fact, he had heard only that morning from one of the two gentlemen he had left lighting their cigars a few steps behind him, of Ida's engagement to Mr. Seville-Sutton. He had thought of nothing else all the morning, and was still thinking of it with exceeding bitterness, when he found himself face to face with the venal beauty herself. In Archie's eyes there was nothing more disgraceful—even disgusting—than a girl's selling herself in marriage—a girl who was not even driven to it by want. And that girl, Ida!

Therefore his manner was such as to suggest to Ida that he too was estranged from her—why, she could not think. So her heart closed up again like a flower when its sun sets. This will account for the exceeding interest of the following conversation between two young people who had long looked forward to such a romantic meeting with the deepest yearning in their brightest day-dreams.

"I hardly expected to meet you here, Miss Luard."

"I came with a picnic-party."

"You've not been here before?"

"Yes, once."

"Beautiful place."

"Yes, very."

"Have you lost your party?"

"No, thank you. Mrs. Tuck is there," nodding towards the seat below. "How is Mrs. Pybus?"

"She's very well, thank you. She will be glad to hear that I've seen you."

Here, his friends rejoining him, he said "Good-bye!" lifted his hat, and was gone.

Poor Ida! She stood motionless for many minutes on the spot where he left her, with bitter tears in her heart. It was a mere fountain of tears which found no channel of relief. The old words, "Oh, Ida, and I love you so!" the tone, the look, the action, which set them to such sweet music, were still, as they had always been, in her ears; but now they were a mere and a sad memory, and no more a hope and joy also.

AN OLD GREEK COMEDY REVIVED.

WE had a long early drive; but it was well worth the pains. I hope the horse thought so; for these West Norfolk roads are a

caution. We are told that if the peasant proprietor gets hold of the land, we shall all go back to primitive savagery. He has got hold of it in France to a very great extent; and there the roads are about the best in Europe. Here in West Norfolk is a land of big properties, yet the roads are simply horse-killing. The great man does not care; it is only one of his houses which stands on his Norfolk estate; he keeps it up for the sake of the pheasants, and, when shooting is over, off he goes to his other house in a hunting shire. What cares he that the heavy sand makes ten miles as bad as twenty, and that his traction-engine, day after day dragging his timber, leaves things worse than rain and frost have made them?

Brandon is our station. From Brandon an hour over the fen (railway I believe not very steady along there) and past glorious Ely brings us to Cambridge, and we are soon inside the little theatre to see and hear the Birds of Aristophanes.

What a lot of ladies! Certainly not all from Girton and Newnham. One is inclined to ask, like the chief captain in the Acts: "Canst thou speak Greek?" But, hush! here is Dr. Parry's music, and soon the curtain rises on that seashore of Mr. O'Connor, which did good service last year in the Ajax, helped out by a foreground of rocks, amid which are moving restlessly about two Greeks in travelling-costume—with the petasos (broad-brimmed felt hat) and the himation (cloak)—their slaves (no free Greek ever moved far without his slaves) carrying each a wine-jar and an olive branch. These are Peithetairos and Euelpides (Mr. Plausible and Mr. Hopeful), who have left Athens because it is too full of debts, and duns, and noise, and lawsuits; and are looking for Utopia. They are under good guidance. Before starting they went to an old bird-fancier and invested a few pence each in an oracular raven and an equally oracular jackdaw. Each has his bird on his wrist, and is coaxing this biting, scratching prophet to give further information. But no; the oracle comes to a dead stop. Both birds point upwards, and decline to authorise any further advance. "It must be here, then," cry the men, and begin kicking against the rocks in front of them. Yes, it is here, for out rushes the peewit (runner-bird, the bird-king's page and porter), and angrily asks: "Who's making all this noise?" The men are taken aback, but only for a

moment; and Plausible insists on seeing King Hoopoe.

Out comes his majesty, a very good stage imitation of the bird into which King Tereus of Thrace was fabled to have been transformed. Of him, despite his queer appearance, the men are not at all afraid; and then the Hoopoe's human sympathies reassure them. They confide to him their longing for a city, but don't somehow care for those that he suggests to them, including a very nice one down by the Red Sea; and, amid the talk, suddenly flashes on Plausible's brain the idea of a great bird-city, built in mid-air, so as to intercept the reek of sacrifice and starve the gods into submission. "Summon your subjects," he says to King Hoopoe, "and I'll develop my plan." And a beautiful song it was, that royal summons, sung behind the scenes, while Hoopoe hopped and fluttered, and waved his wings, and turned his head on one side, and the two Athenians were, as well they might be, lost in admiration. "Oh, royal Zeus, what a flood of honey does that bird's voice stream o'er all the wood." Ah, those Greeks! but, unfortunately, it is not Greek music at all. There is none in all the revived play. More's the pity, for Professor Mahaffy, who has written so delightfully about Social Life in Old Greece, assures us that it was very good, though its scale was quite different from ours. The music is all Dr. Parry's; even the raven with mouthpiece and double flute plays a modern tune, albeit to a Lydian measure. This royal summons, however, was beautiful, as Aristophanes meant it to be. Who would have thought that such delicious melody could be got out of such unpromising nonsense as "kikkabou, kikkabou, toro toro toro lililix"? I see some wise critic suggests that Greek birds have a very different note from English ones. "What English bird," he asks, "says anything like kikkabou?" My dear sir, by-and-by, when the New Zealander is musing amid the ruins of St. Paul's, we shall have some Antipodal commentator asking: "What bird ever uttered a sound like tu-whit tu-who?" Consider, it is twenty-three centuries since Aristophanes put in these bird-sounds, simply as stage-directions; we know the letters, but we certainly don't know how the Greeks pronounced them, nor how they managed their accents. Therefore, we had best be content with what Dr. Parry gave us.

Well, in troops the chorus, swan,

flamingo, spoonbill, crane, owl, hawk, cock, and so on down to thrush and linnet—birds when they turned their side-faces and waved their wings, men when you got a front view, and the wings drooped like Inverness-cloaks, and the human legs became too conspicuous. The long-necked birds were the best, the human faces being almost hidden in the white down of the breasts. They made play with their necks, and were altogether livelier than the others. One crane in particular almost always had his head on the ground just as a hungry crane would. I suppose there was a spring in the neck. Anyhow, his action was so natural, that I don't despair by next time of seeing mixed mathematics applied to invent some more natural way of folding the wings. The managers tell us they only went in for "a certain amount of ornithological accuracy;" and they have quite convinced themselves that Aristophanes's chorus was not bird-like at all, but purely conventional, founding this opinion on certain vases on which, says Professor Newton, the characters in the *Birds* are figured. No doubt some of the birds were dressed up like pantomime monsters. "Oh, Apollo, what a yawning chasm!" cries Hopeful, as the royal page opens his mouth. It is clear that the peewit, or whatever bird it was, was dressed up like a big-headed pantomime-bird; it seemed absurd for those two Cambridge men to be comically afraid of the harmless little creature that did not know how to manage its wings.

Whatever the vases say—and in that respect I venture to hint that we do not go for the correct costume of the period to our common crockeryware—I am sure that a play, which the old writers tell us was put on the stage with a splendour never equalled even in Athens, would not have failed in the matter of dressing-up. The Greek playwright laboriously taught his actors their parts; he had at his command the whole resources of a most artistic age; the play was a religious ceremony (the altar on the Cambridge proscenium, round which the chorus danced, reminded us of this). He was sure to dress up his birds from crest to spur, at the same time putting a human look into their masks, so that the owl should be easily recognisable as Chaerephon, and so on. I don't believe any of the Athenian chorus wore spectacles; and if one of them had to blow his nose, he would not have done it as if he was ashamed of himself, but would

have somehow made the action part of the stage play. But though Dr. Waldstein and his Cambridge friends did not go in for stage-illusion, or full bird costume, their chorus was a grand success whenever it was doing something. That futile dropping of the wings was only noticeable while they were at rest. They looked wonderfully well when they first came in singing round the altar; and better still when, catching sight of the men whom they naturally looked on as enemies, they showed their wrath by flapping wings, screaming defiance, and at length making a brilliant attack on the intruders, wing behind wing, like shields compacted into a "tortoise." These, his guests, Hoopoe defends—they do a little comic skirmishing on their own account, hitting out with wine-jar and olive-branch from their shelter under the king's wings—and at last he persuades his unruly subjects to give Plausible a hearing. He begins, but only to be interrupted by the owl, the leader of the opposition; but when he comes to the words "universal empire," the owl strikes an attitude; he is evidently half convinced. The rest of the birds show their satisfaction in choric cries, the cock comes out and crows, and goes back to talk it over with the crane. Plausible is a clever fellow, just the sort of demagogue who is always sure to come to the front wherever there is a "sovereign people" to be led by the nose. He descants on the past grandeur of the birds, as contrasted with their present low estate, as dexterously as if he were a Home Ruler addressing a Connaught audience. Birds are older than the world itself, for does not *Æsop* tell

How the lark was embarrassed to bury his father,
On account of the then non-existence of earth.

They are right royal—

For instance the cock was a sovereign of yore
In the empire of Persia, and ruled it before
Darius's time, and you all must have heard
That his title exists as "the Persian bird" . . .

Then each of the gods has his separate fowl,
Apollo a hawk and Minerva an owl,
And Jove has his eagle appointed to stand
As the emblem of empire . . .

All this time the excitement is increasing, and at last the birds join in a stately march. They are won over—and here is the point of the play—just as the Athenians were by the plausible arguments of Alcibiades. For it is that handsome young aristocrat turned demagogue who is satirised in Plausible. He had persuaded the Athenians to undertake the Sicilian expedition—which ruined them—assuring

them that, Sicily once conquered, Italy and Carthage and all must follow, and the Mediterranean would become an Athenian lake. As for the Spartans—typified by the old-fashioned gods of Olympus—they would be starved out, and Athens would be undisputed mistress of the world. Such was the scheme where-with Alcibiades tickled the ears of the Athenians, a scheme as unsubstantial as this “city in the clouds,” which Plausible persuades the birds to build. The plan for starving out the gods is a special hit at Alcibiades, who had been prosecuted for impiety, and was a pupil, though a very lax and disobedient one, of that broad-churchman Socrates who called in question the debasing idolatry of his countrymen. Aristophanes’s position is peculiar. He hates Socrates and the reformers with a perfect hatred. We see this in his *Clouds*, where Socrates is shamelessly caricatured. At the same time, he can have a hearty laugh at his own gods, the accepted gods of the time. A Roman Catholic coming down with insatiable fury on the heads of all Dissenters, and yet cutting jokes as pious Italians do on the saints in whom they devoutly believe, would be something like the great comedian. However, the point of his satire is unmistakable; and that he could thus satirise the popular idol proves that there was plenty of freedom of opinion in Athens just then, though it probably accounts for his only getting the second prize, despite the exceptional cleverness of this, the very cleverest of his plays.

The birds, then, says Plausible, may easily get back to their old grandeur, if they will combine together into one great city—a hit here at the Athenians, whom Pericles had persuaded to give up all their country, and gather inside the walls. As for the gods of Olympus, if they won’t knock under, why declare war. Forbid them a right of way:

They must not pass as heretofore through your
august abodes,
A courting of their Semeles, Alcmenas, and the
rest.
Such contraband amours shall now most strictly be
suppressed;

and, moreover, the new city will intercept that reek of sacrifice on which the Olympians live, so that you will have it in your hands to starve them out. Over men you have a thorough pull. If they don’t come round, threaten to send your armies to devour their seed-corn, and if they agree to worship you instead of the

Olympians—your herald pointing out how much more cheaply it may be done, since

You will economise the cost
Of marble domes and gilded gates,
The birds will live at cheaper rates,
Lodging without shame or scorn
In a maple or a thorn;
The most exalted and divine
Will have an olive for his shrine

—why you will protect them. Your thrushes will eat up the midges, and your owls the locusts and field-mice. Here is the threat:

If they flout us, we’ll raise a granivorous troop,
To sweep their whole crops with a ravenous swoop,
And the crows will be sent on a different errand,
To pounce all at once with a sudden surprise
On their oxen and sheep to peck out their eyes,
And leave them stone-blind for Apollo to cure.
He’ll try it; he’ll work for his salary, sure!

While the heralds are sent off to men and gods, and the city is building, Hoopoe takes the human pair in to lunch, leaving his queen, the Nightingale—the Procne of the story—in charge of his subjects. As soon as they are gone begins the parabasis, a device of Greek comedy, in the form of a recitative, for letting the author speak face to face with the audience. It is like prologue or epilogue or Rumour in Shakespeare, only, instead of being at the beginning or end, it is between the acts, for there are acts in Aristophanes. I don’t remember how sticklers for the “unity of place” explain the fact that part of the *Birds* takes place on earth and part up in the clouds. This particular parabasis is the grandest in Aristophanes. It satirises the sudden passion of the Athenians for natural science by giving a mock heroic account of the origin of things, so skilfully managed, that it is difficult to tell whether all of it, except the political allusions cleverly interwoven, is not heroic in earnest after all. It has had many translators, Swinburne among them. This is how Hookham Frere—who employed his learned leisure in Malta in putting Aristophanes into a shapely English dress—begins his version:

Ye children of man, whose life is a span,
Protracted with sorrow from day to day,
Naked and featherless, feeble and querulous,
Sickly calamitous creatures of clay,
Attend to the words of the sovereign birds,
Immortal illustrious lords of the air,
Who survey from on high with a merciful eye,
Your struggles of misery, labour, and care.

The whole thing is a glorious gem of chastened fancy and choice diction.

Meanwhile, Plausible and friend have eaten the root which makes wings sprout, each chaffing the other on his metamorphosis. “You’re like a goose on a cheap sign-board,” says the one; “And you remind

me of a plucked blackbird"—the Athenians ate these small fowls—"feathers on the wings and nowhere else," retorts the other.

I must not forget the beautiful tune to which the chorus welcome their queen. It must have been encored at the time, for the part of Procne was played by a famous Athenian lady flute-player, who had been away starring it through the cities of Lesser Asia, and this chorale was her welcome home. Here is Dr. Kennedy's rendering :

O my ownie, O my brownie ; bird of birds the
dearest,
Voice that mingling with my lays ever was the
clearest ;
Playmate of my early days, still to me the
nearest ;
Nightingale, thus again do I meet thee—do I
greet thee.

While this was being sung the favourite played the accompaniment on the flute, and one can fancy the enthusiasm, and how the welkin rang, for the Greeks had no roofs to their theatres.

Do not think that the parabasis keeps up its majestic or mock-majestic tone all through. There is plenty of fun in it. Here, for instance, the poet satirises the dullness of the "legitimate drama," a specially bad fault, for as all plays were competitive, and as they were given in sets of four, the tragic trilogy, and the satyric drama, like a farce, to wind up with, the conscientious hearer, who really meant to judge the thing on its merits, would be in for it day after day. Well might the poet say :

Nothing can be more delightful than the having
wings to wear.
A spectator sitting here accommodated with a pair
Might, for instance, if he found a tragic chorus dull
and heavy,
Take his flight and dine at home, and if he did not
choose to leave yet,
Might return in better humour when the weary
drawl was ended.

The next act opens in Cloudecuckoo-burgh, which name is received with acclamations by the chorus. Enter a priest to pray for the weal of the new city. Wonderfully he is got up, with fillet round his temples, and a trumpeter going before him. But Plausible will not let him sacrifice in peace, he keeps mixing up his new bird-gods with the priest's old ones. Then the libation is made—barley, which draws the chorus in an undignified rush and sets them all pecking, and wine, which makes that vulgar Plausible stoop down and wet his fingers in it and then lick them. At last Plausible drives off the priest and says, in true pantomime style, that he will do the sacrifice himself. But he is not allowed to

finish off quietly. First comes a poet, who insists on reciting his Pindaric ode on the subject. Plausible has much ado to buy him off with a couple of somebody else's cloaks. Then a soothsayer brings old oracles ; and crying, "Take my book and see for yourself," says, "fate ordains that the bearer of this divine message should have a new coat and a good pair of boots, and a tripe dinner, with a good bumper of wine."

"Oh, you old humbug!" retorts Plausible ; "just take my book and see what's written.

"But when some swindler uninvited there,
Disturbs the sacrifice, and tripe would share,
Let well-belaboured ribs be all his fare."

And suiting the action to the word, he beats the intruder round and round the altar, and at last drives him off.

A geometer—asqueaky-voiced old gentleman, with slaves carrying big compasses, and the Greek substitute for a theodolite—who wants to plot out the sky into equal shares, fares little better ; and an inspector and an informer get still harder lines. As he drives the last off the stage, Plausible packs up his sacrificing apparatus, and says he will go and finish indoors.

A couple more beautiful choral songs, and a parabasis full of political jokes, and then a pair of messengers explain in comic style how the cloud-city was built. Thirty thousand cranes swallowed the foundation-stones and flew aloft with them ; herons and other wading birds pumped up the water ; and, like children sucking lollipops, the swallows mixed the mortar in their mouths.

Aye, and the ducks, by Jove, all tightly girt,
Kept carrying bricks ; and other birds were flying
With trowels on their heads to lay the bricks.

But, in spite of its cloud-based walls, Iris, the messenger of the Olympians, flies in, hotly pursued by bird-scouts. She is on her way to earth to ask how it is the sacrifices are stopped ; and she gets very wroth when Plausible tells her that the old order is changed :

Birds unto men are gods ; to them must men
Now sacrifice ; and not, by Jove, to Jove.

She threatens her father's thunderbolts, but is hustled off. She was as good a make-up as any of them—a trifle too tall, but very comely in her sky-blue robe, flame-coloured skull-cap, and rainbow wings.

Meanwhile men find they are saving so much in sacrifices, that they vote Plausible a golden crown. The gods, on the other hand, are starved out, and are on the point of sending a threatening embassy, when

Prometheus, always man's friend, steals out to put Plausible on his guard. The Titan is so huddled up in shawls, and has such a comical umbrella over his head, that it is a long time before Plausible recognises him. Then, the fright he is in lest Jove should find him out! "Stop, stop, don't call out my name!" he whispers when the delighted Plausible greets him.

"I'm lost for ever if Zeus sees me here.

But while I'm telling you the news from heaven

Just take this sunshade, will you? Hold it up

Above my head, that so the gods mayn't see me."

And then in his ear he tells him what straits they are reduced to in Olympus; how the barbarian gods are in full mutiny; and advises him not to give in to the embassy, but to insist on having the thunderbolts surrendered, and Miss Sovereignty, a handsome girl who keeps the key of the lightning-closet, given up to him as his bride.

Then, with the last act, enter the Olympian ambassadors—Neptune, who plays dignity, Hercules, and Triballos the Thracian god. Plausible is busy cooking, and keeps his back to Neptune, while the latter is trying to explain that he will find it best to come to terms. This cooking is too much for Hercules. He comes and looks, throws back his lion's skin, gets recognised, and is soon won over, and brings over the bedizened Triballos by threatening to give him a good drubbing with his club. They are now two to one; and by the time Hercules has swallowed the contents of three or four stewpans (birds they are, to his astonishment, aristocrat birds, whom it was necessary to punish), he is ready to vote for whatever Plausible tells him. The end is that the gods give in; and, in a blaze of Bengal fire and the scent of incense, with the birds shouting a marriage-song, Plausible and Sovereignty, a buxom lass with painted face and a much more liberal display of charms than a Greek bride would have made, appear in a triumphal-car. Plausible has the thunder in his hand, and the amiable Hoopoe stands behind with outstretched wings, like a good father, blessing their union.

I have seen many extravaganzas, but I never saw anything better, and it all seemed so natural that one fancies the genuine Greek tradition must have been preserved through all these centuries. I hope the play will be acted in London and elsewhere for I should like "the non-classical public" to see it; it would give them more insight into old Greek life and politics than half-a-dozen volumes.

Dr. Waldstein says, "The primary idea of the performance is academical," not the mere examination-value of getting up so many lines of Greek, but the giving all who took a part, and all who looked on, a thorough lesson in the Greek drama. Having seen this at Cambridge, one can gauge the feelings of an Athenian when he saw it as it was first acted. What an idea it gives us, who are accustomed to the two hundred and three hundred nights of a pet piece, of the lavishness of Athenians, to think that a play like this was got up in such grand style often for only a single performance!

SOME LONDON CLEARINGS.

"CRIPPLEGATE!" replied a City policeman at the corner of a street behind the General Post Office to an enquiry as to its whereabouts. "Well, you see, there ain't any Cripplegate in particular; all round about's Cripplegate." That was so far satisfactory, for all round about was just our destination—Cripplegate in general, with a special aim towards the church of St. Giles's, Cripplegate. Sufficient is it that we are in the right track, and may reach our destination by the exertion of a little topographical insight. After all, it is much pleasanter to find your way to a place than to be ignominiously led there by a policeman, by some short cut that you will never be able to make out again. Now here is London Wall, as it happens; the name plainly to be read on the corner of this straight uncompromising street, and a little farther on, a morsel of old London Wall itself appears in evidence where there is a little slip of a graveyard that belongs to St. Alphage, that funny church round the corner, that seems to have been cut and sliced by City traffic, till there is hardly anything left of it. Now if we follow the line of London Wall, we shall surely come to Cripplegate Church, that is if any faith is to be placed in old maps of London, which show the church as just outside the City battlements, close to the gate where once the cripples from the hospital hard-by stood exhibiting their infirmities, and demanding alms from those who passed into or out of the City.

But it is not easy to steer by ancient landmarks in modern London; and then some tempting-looking old courts and passages invite exploration, and mix up our bearings generally, so that we are in

Aldersgate of a sudden in a bewildering whirl of traffic, and have cleared the City wall in one stride without knowing anything about it. But passing up Aldersgate a street to the right announces itself as the Barbican, and suggests some connection with the City fortifications. And pausing over the warlike sound of Barbican, we should like to believe in the burgh kenning tower, the old Saxon watch-tower, like the conning tower in the iron-clads. But unfortunately there is the French barbican, with a similar word in Spanish and Italian, which the all-cunning Littré derives from Arabic *bârbâc-khaneh*, meaning rampart before the gate, and so we are carried back to Crusading times, when red cross knights fresh from Acre and Ascalon brought back new notions in the art of attacking and defending cities.

After this it does not surprise us to come upon Redcross Street, leading in the right direction, and we imagine ourselves red cross knights for the nonce pricking down towards the City gate. People live in Redcross Street—live there in considerable numbers—and it has the dim air of a street that has seen better days. There are old people about who have lived here all their lives, and who shake their heads now, and ascribe the undoubted decadence of the neighbourhood to the Metropolitan Railway. Before then everybody was happy and respectable. A great library stood in Redcross Street, known as Dr. Williams's Library, much resorted to by Nonconformist divines, and giving a sort of academic flavour to the neighbourhood. To say nothing of the numerous dissenting chapels that were scattered about in curious courts and attractive alleys up and down, most of which chapels with their congregations have taken train and migrated to the suburbs, while the library has taken up magnificent quarters near Gower Street—a happy thing for the library, perhaps, and its students, but for poor Redcross Street quite disheartening.

But we would not have missed Redcross Street on any account, for at the bottom of it unexpectedly breaks on the sight one of the pleasantest, most characteristic bits of old London. Just now there is a charming gleam of winter sunshine, and in the brightness of it, with a background of murky vapour, rises the tower of old St. Giles's, Cripplegate, square and solid Gothic in its lower stage, but crowned above with the graceful curves of an Italian campanile—rises, too, over some

timbered houses of quaint and ancient form, at the side of which is a pleasing Jacobean gateway that gives a glimpse of a grassy graveyard within, and a tracery of now bare and leafless branches. And it adds further beauty to the scene, to remember that here is one of the most hallowed shrines of all the English world. For here lies John Milton, and surely if the whole City is laid waste and turned into new streets of shops and avenues of warehouses, this little corner will be held sacred for all time.

It is a calm and pleasant spot this, in the midst of the City turmoil. Through the gateway a footpath leads round the church, quite a recent innovation, cutting through the old churchyard that once lay solitary and neglected with its crowd of tombstones among the surrounding houses. And then for some years the graveyard formed a secluded pleasant nook of shade and sward, the gravestones all removed, and the space turfed and planted. But business exigencies demanded a short cut from one nest of warehouses to another, so that now there is a constant patter of feet among the graves and past the grated doorways of the church where the great poet is sleeping. The doors are barred, indeed, but this inhospitality is rather in seeming than in reality, for on one of the old-fashioned doors by the entrance-archway is a brass plate inscribed "Sexton," and you have only to ring here and request admittance, and the doors are freely thrown open. The church is light and cheerful-looking, of a weak kind of Gothic, for the early Norman church was burnt down, and this is a work of Henry the Eighth's reign, and it is one of the few City churches which escaped the Great Fire of London. Perhaps, as its most precious memories are of Milton's time, we may regret that it has been restored quite so much to its original Gothic bareness. Snug galleries and warm high pews, now all swept away, formed a link between Milton's age and ours that is now wanting. A tinge of Puritanism even would not have been ungraceful, and, when we learn that Milton's monument has been removed from one end of the church to the other to make room for choir-boys, if we were angels we should weep, but being only mortals, content ourselves with a shrug of resignation.

After all, it would be a pity to hurt the feelings of this nice old lady with the silver hair who is busy about the church,

and who answers questions with alacrity, without pushing herself forward as cicerone. And then, as we are reminded, the monument is not an original one, probably it never stood over the real site of the poet's tomb. "He lies here," says the old lady, leading the way to the upper end of the nave, and pointing to a space occupied by seats. "He lies here crossways," indicating the exact direction of the body north-eastwards. And she seems so certain about the matter, and generally so well acquainted with the respective positions of those who sleep below, that the statement carries a kind of conviction with it. A Miltonic kind of person, too, is this good woman, born in the neighbourhood, and her father was a schoolmaster in Redcross Street, and possibly his great-grandfather might have been usher with Mr. John Milton at his house in the Barbican. And we are all the more willing to accept the silver-haired old lady's testimony on this point, that if she is right the vandalic opening of the poet's tomb about a hundred years ago failed of its mark. But alas! the testimony the other way is pretty strong. Aubrey, who was almost a contemporary, writes: "He lies buried in St. Giles, Cripplegate, at the right hand. His stone is now removed, for about seven years since"—November, 1681—"the two steppes to the communion table were raysed. I guesse Jo Speed and he lie together." And it adds a strong confirmation to this that digging here, certain ghouls of churchwardens and overseers came upon a coffin of lead resting upon another of wood—and Milton's father is known to have been buried in the same grave—and the leaden coffin was opened, and the skull found covered with long brown hair, with teeth beautifully white and perfect; and the hair was cut off and the teeth distributed as relics, while one greedy man is said to have possessed himself of a rib. Even gentle Cowper launched a malediction at these evil-doers.

Ill fare the hand that heaved the stones
Where Milton's ashes lay,
That trembled not to grasp his bones,
And steal his dust away.

And here we are reminded that other and more cheerful memories cling to the church of St. Giles. On these altar-steps, before they were "raysed," stood one Oliver Cromwell with his wife, Elizabeth Bouchier—this last a name that suggests a French Protestant family. Cromwell was then a plain young country squire, little thinking that he would one day sway the land with

more than kingly power. But Cripplegate Church had long been noted as an especially fortunate place to be married at. Many had been the splendid wedding pageants of illustrious nobles, and the partiality for the church as a place to be married at has come down even to our own days. To be married on a Christmas Day at Cripplegate was long, and perhaps is even now, regarded as a cumulation of happy auspices by the artisans of the neighbourhood, and we read, not so long ago, of a special choral service given as a welcome to the Christmas brides and grooms. Perhaps the merry bells of Cripplegate have had something to do with the celebrity of the church for bridals: the twelve tuneful bells that swing in the old tower, of which number ten bears this appropriate verse:

In wedlock's bands, all ye who join
With hands your hearts unite;
So shall our tuneful tongues combine
To laud the nuptial rite.

And in this connection it is pleasant to recall that the Cripplegate Society of Friendly Ringers still meet on alternate Tuesday evenings to practise, sending a merry peal over the great wilderness of housetops that lie around.

But to return to the monuments in which the church is so rich, there is John Speed the antiquary, looking briskly out over his books, and one Busbie, a cheerful gentleman of the sixteenth century, who left four loads of charcoal to the poor.

Within this Chappel Busbie's Bones
In Dust awhile must stay.

Which "awhile" shows a prescient appreciation of the ways of inquisitive churchwardens and enterprising hewers-out of new streets and railways; while in all probability Busbie's monument is over somebody else's bones, seeing that all these tablets have been changed and shuffled about; so that John Foxe's tablet—Puritan Foxe of the Martyrs—as likely as not is over some actor from the Fortune Theatre and vice versâ. It is pleasant, too, to come upon quite a Shakespearian touch in the monument to Margaret, the second daughter of Sir Thomas Lucy, of Charlecote, "third in direct descent of the name of Thomas." The Lucys, probably, had their London lodging in this neighbourhood, and the chimes at midnight to which Justice Shallow alludes, may have been these very chimes of St. Giles, which still ring out at noon and midnight, and every three hours between. John Foxe had been a tutor in Sir Thomas

Lucy's family, and probably enough his old pupils may have been led to settle near him. For there is another monument connected with the Lucy family, a monument which bears quite a gruesome association in popular tradition. This is a fine but ugly mural monument to a young maiden, Constance Whitney, whose mother was a Lucy, and whose grandmother, Lady Lucy, according to the inscription upon the tomb, "bred her up." There is a representation of a long sarcophagus, or coffin, out of which rises the torso of a figure in a certainly hysteric and painful attitude. And this, says tradition, represents a young woman who was buried alive, by accident, be it understood—a very rich young lady, who was buried in her rings because her family had not the heart to take them off. And the sexton hearing of this, on the night after the funeral dug down to the coffin, opened it, and began to pull off the rings from the dead maiden's fingers, but so roughly that the fingers bled, and the maiden cried out, and presently sat up in her coffin as is represented in the monument. Tradition adds that the young woman was afterwards married and had many children. More grave historians describe the monument as a representation of the soul rising from the tomb—a very elderly and ugly-looking soul considering that it belongs to a maiden of seventeen summers.

"As lame as St. Giles, Cripplegate," was an old saying, St. Giles being the patron saint of cripples, although it is curious to note that Cripplegate was so called even before the foundation of the church. There was a well close by, "the common well and spring of St. Giles," with a pond that was supplied by the well, and, perhaps, with some ancient superstitious virtue attached to the water which brought the lame people with their crutches to lave in the pool; to accommodate whom the hospital was built, and afterwards the church. But anyhow it is delightful to find that our silver-haired old lady remembers the well perfectly—used to fetch water from it—a well at the bottom of a large flight of stone steps, which steps, as well as the stone cover to the well, were built at the expense of Sir Richard Whittington. Later on it was called Crowder's Well, but it is all vaulted up now and buried; the name of it only preserved in Well Street close by. But it will come to life again some day, perhaps, when we and our houses, and streets, and churches have all crumbled to decay.

And while we are chatting with the silver-haired old lady, we come to the west door of the church, with the tower overhead, and the sun shining pleasantly in through the iron bars, a patch of green graveyard in front, and bounding the graveyard a venerable-looking bastion, one of the most perfect bits still left of old London Wall. It is the extreme point of the line of defence in this direction, for here the wall took a sweep downwards towards Newgate, when it appears again for a moment within the walls of that dark and tragic prison—in the most dark, tragic, and dreadful spot of all, the ghastly graveyard of the murderers.

But here the old walls look down upon graves which, all unnoted and forgotten as they are, have attached to them no sinister memories. The sun shines pleasantly on the nook of green turf; the footsteps of passers-by echo briskly through the vaulted doorway, and through the tower window-openings is a glimpse of quaint old-world roof-tops. A sidelong ray of sunshine too steals inside the church, and rests upon John Milton's monument.

But there is a vicarage also belonging to old St. Giles, a nice roomy old house, with a quiet little passage to it leading out of the busy business street. Strange it must be to live among these great homeless buildings, to sleep in the empty City, and then in the morning to listen to the roaring tide of humanity rushing in, while all day long the eddies of unknown footsteps circle about the place, with all kinds of quick changes that must become familiar after a while as the changing chimes of the church-bells overhead. What a whirl about the dinner-hour! What dead silence for a brief space as counters and dining-rooms are crowded with a solid mass of people intent on a more or less solid meal, while if the City conduits were once more running with beer and wine as on festal days of old, they would not keep pace with the stream that flows into thousands of foaming beakers. And then a fresh commotion, but this time different somehow from before; the footsteps a trifle less strenuous and more inclined to loiter, while soon the ebb begins, gently at first, with the well-hung chariot of Dives swinging through the narrow City streets, and growing stronger and stronger as the short day wanes, and finally roaring away in the distance with heavy-loaded railway-waggon.

And with all this we have the feeling that this, our first quest for green places in the

City has been so far successful. The spot of green is a tiny one indeed, but it is full of memories. Within a stone's-throw from these walls the greater part of Milton's life was spent. It is but a few minutes' walk to Bread Street, where he was born, and where the church within whose walls he was baptised, is still adorned with a tablet recording the fact, with Dryden's eulogy in old-fashioned characters :

Three poets in three distant ages born,
Greece, Italy, and England did adorn ;
The first in loftiness of thought surpass'd,
The next in majesty, in both the last.
The force of Nature cou'd no further goe,
To make a third she joyn'd the former two.

The City, as Milton knew it, was not without its gardens and shady spots where quiet meditation was as easy as in the silent fields. St. Bride's churchyard, where he lived after his first marriage, his wife found very solitary, and the Barbican, which was his next dwelling-place, must then have been a quiet suburban retreat. In Holborn he found a pleasant nook overlooking Lincoln's Inn Fields, and then he quitted the City for a while, to take lodgings in Whitehall—in official apartments attached to his post of Foreign Secretary. And soon after he is in Westminster, in a house that looks over the greensward of St. James's Park, daily becoming more dim to his view as blindness came over his tired eyes. Hence he is driven at the Restoration, and comes to hide among his friends in the City, lying concealed, they say, in Bartholomew Close, still quaint and retired, where there is still left a charming old house of Milton's time at the corner, now a greengrocer's shop. A capital house to hide in, with its narrow passages and dark-shadowed rooms. But when the Act of Indemnity makes things safe for him again, he goes not back to the west, but takes up his abode at Holborn, and in Jewin Street.

There were gardens in Jewin Street then, "fair garden plots, and summer houses for pleasure," where the citizens had built and planted upon the old burial-ground of the Jews—the old, old burial-ground, where the Jews had buried their dead from the time they first came over with the Normans till their expulsion in the reign of Edward the First; and here upon the old Jews' garden, from which they had been driven so many centuries ago, Milton wrote the greater part of his great stately epic. The plague drove him, in his turn, from his garden to Chalfont, but he came back to the City when the plague was

stayed, to settle again in Old Cripplegate, by the side of Bunhill Fields, where he lived, "eyeless in Gaza," till his parting bell was tolled.

It is not a long walk from St. Giles's, Cripplegate, to Bunhill Fields, but there are certain memories we should like to recall, as we take leave of the silver-haired old lady who has been such a quiet interesting guide, and, passing out through the sexton's lodge, we find ourselves in Fore Street. Once upon a time there was a butcher's shop in Fore Street—Milton may have bought his joints of meat there—with a sign over the door, James Foe, butcher. The Foes, by the way, were Huntingdonshire people, of whom we shall find a considerable colony settled about Cripplegate. And the butcher's sharp son was named Daniel, and afterwards assumed the aristocratic prefix of De, and thus out of the strength of the butcher's shop came the sweetness of Robinson Crusoe. Now out of Fore Street run three principal streets—Redcross Street already visited, Whitecross Street with its debtor's prison, now turned to gentler purposes, and Milton Street, and this last is the old Grub Street of poor authors and booksellers' hacks; not come to any great wealth or comfort—the street, that is—even now in spite of its more honoured name. Once, perhaps, it was Grape Street, and vines may have clustered about the cottage doors, when it was the street of bowyers, fletchers, and bowstring-makers, but it had become Grub Street when Milton knew it, and when Foxe, and Defoe, and John Speed, the antiquary, lived there.

And there is a little lane at the top known as Beech Lane, from some forgotten worthy, De la Bèche, Lieutenant of the Tower and what-not in bygone days, and here stood the roomy town-house of the mitred and dignified Abbot of Ramsey, in Huntingdonshire. Now at the dissolution of the monasteries Ramsey Abbey fell to the Cromwells, and although the London house seemed to have been assigned to one Sir Drew Drewry, yet it is highly probable that the Cromwells acquired some of the abbey property in Cripplegate, and likely enough a town lodging. After the Restoration Drewry House was occupied by Prince Rupert, and Milton, blind and old in his back parlour in Jewin Street, may have heard the bells of Cripplegate in full peal as the Merry Monarch came to pay a gracious visit to his cousin Rupert. Some

part of Rupert's house afterwards became the hall of the Glovers' Company, and after that a dissenting chapel. A little later the chapel was a carpenter's workshop, and has since come to greater decadence.

Another great house which has ceased to exist, is recalled by a secluded court named Garter Court, after Sir Thomas Wriothesley, Garter King-at-Arms, of the family of the Earls of Southampton, who built a noble dwelling there. And there was an aristocratic mansion in Hanover Court where General Monk, Duke of Albemarle, is said to have resided, a near neighbour to Prince Rupert.

In the first days of the Restoration, when there were gay doings even in Cripplegate, and the bells of St. Giles's were in full peal, the worthy vicar of the parish, Samuel Annesley, felt himself a good deal out of tune with all the rejoicing. Well connected, and of a distinguished family, he had been a preacher of considerable mark during the Commonwealth. He had preached before the House of Commons—he had made of St. Giles, Cripplegate, a centre of evangelic propaganda. His cousin, the Earl of Anglesey, was in great favour with the king, and at the same time a man much trusted by the Puritans, and in many ways a medium of arrangement between the two parties. But Annesley, although had he conformed to the new régime he might have well hoped to rise to distinction in the Church, gave up his living and became the minister of the chapel at Little St. Helen's, Bishopsgate. He must have been well known to Milton, a neighbour, and of the same political party, and fellow-sufferers in the same cause, an interesting figure to us, for from him we may trace the beginning of one of the greatest religious movements of the following century. Annesley's daughter was John Wesley's mother; and the holy places of Wesleyan history are but a little way from here.

The actual Cripplegate, which the most knowing of City policemen is unable to point out, stood at the top of Wood Street, and was a handsome Jacobean edifice with flanking towers, the upper part used as a prison, like most of the other City gates, and so stood till the year 1760, when it was pulled down and sold for old materials. Passing through Cripplegate as late as the middle of last century we should have come into a region of open fields and recreation grounds. The green spots now furnished by the turf of Finsbury Circus

and Finsbury Square are all that remain of the City park known as Moorfields, of which Strype makes mention. "Formerly," he writes, "a moorish rotten ground." But now, in his time, "for the walks themselves, and the continual care of the City to have them in that comely and worthy manner maintained, they are no mean cause of preserving health and wholesome air to the City; and such an eternal honour thereto, as no iniquity of time shall be able to deface." But, alas! our gentle antiquary had not properly estimated the iniquities of time, and this people's playground, at their very doors, and attainable without trouble or expense, is all built over and lost to the public.

And the district thus deprived of its pleasure-grounds is one of the most densely populated on the earth's surface, with hardly a breathing space in the dense ugly crowd of houses, hardly a spot where the weary can rest, or where children can play. This Cripplegate is the beginning of it, a very Lazarus gate, out of which the privileged City has turned its poor. Clerkenwell, St. Luke's, which was once Cripplegate, but long since made into a separate parish, Hoxton, and Shoreditch, with Bethnal Green, form a solid mass of closely packed houses, amongst which the only people who really flourish are the publicans. It is a manufacturing city without any great manufactures, a home for industries which have more or less decayed. And this, the Cripplegate district, is very largely the home of industrious artisans, home workers, who are engaged in the small, uncertain industries which depend so much on fashion and momentary prosperity, working jewellers, watchmakers, pocket-book makers, piano-string makers, makers of the hundred and one articles that people buy when they have money, but which they can manage to do without in bad times, and these artisans, with their solitary sedentary occupations, are the very class most in need of such spaces, where they can breathe the free air and rest the weary eyes upon a morsel of greenery.

What a great opportunity was lost by our ancestors when the old walls and ditches of the City had ceased to be of use as defences, an opportunity, skilfully turned to account, which has made so many foreign cities gay and beautiful places—the opportunity of making a green and shady boulevard in the very centre of the dense network of houses. With the Old Bailey a pleasant grove, and London Wall a shady

avenue, and Houndsditch gay with flower-beds, with this girdle of verdure about the City, what a pleasant place it would have been! But it is of no use regretting the irrevocable past. All that remains for us is to ask, do we make the most of the open spaces still left to us? There are Bunhill Fields, for instance, that show as a green patch upon the map, to which we are now fairly upon our way. We have left behind us the little bit of green Moorfields that is still left in dignified seclusion in the middle of Finsbury Square, and we are now in the City Road with its hurrying crowds, its omnibuses and tram-cars, and the long lines of lamps that are just beginning to twinkle in the twilight, and there is the Artillery Ground, jealously shut up within high walls, and the strong feudal-looking castle, that is the militia headquarters; and here are Bunhill Fields, not green but grey, with their tombstones so thickly set that they give one the impression of a great silent crowd, with an indefinite shapeless presence, watching and waiting there while the living world hurries head-long by, and heeds them not.

A FEW MORE FOOLS.*

FROM our short notice of Brusquet, it is evident that he was frequently absent from his official post for considerable periods. During this time it was manifestly impossible that the court could be deprived of a jester; a substitute, therefore, was necessary. To supply this need, then, we find another fool almost as well known as Brusquet, in the person of Thonin, or Thony. His name first appears in the royal accounts for 1559, where is an entry of eight shirts, six for the fool and two for his governor. Then follow a pair of breeches of black cloth, lined with black, for Thony, one hundred sols tournois, three and one-third ells black velvet to make him a cloak and a square cap. The household book for 1560 gives us the name of the fool's governor, Louis de la Groue, surnamed La Farce. He had a present from the king of sixty-nine livres tournois as a contribution to the cure of an illness he had long had at Blois, and in the same year we find master and pupil sent to the Duke of Lorraine on behalf of the king. At this time, too, we find his portrait was

taken, for we have an entry of twenty-two livres tournois paid to William Boutelou, painter, living at Blois, for the portrait of Thony, fool to the said king. Thony was at the tourneys of 1565, where he evidently appeared in the costume of the age of Charles the Sixth, for in the books of that year we find entries of black velvet for a bonnet, ten ells party-coloured velvet to make a cloak reaching to the ground, two and a quarter ells green satin for a doublet and breeches, and three pairs of shoes of yellow, green, and red cloth, all in the old French style. He appears to have died about the end of 1572. Brantome tells us he first belonged to M. d'Orleans, who begged him from his mother, near Coussey in Picardy. "The poor woman gave him up reluctantly, as she had vowed him to the Church, on account of his two elder brothers being fools, one named Gazan and the other name unknown, to the Cardinal of Ferrara. And bless you, see the innocence of the mother, for Thony was more cracked than the other two. At first he was simply idiotic, but by companionship and instruction he came to be called the first of fools, and, no offence to Triboulet and Sibilot, he was such that M. de Ronsard did not disdain, by order of the king, to use his pen to write his epitaph, as if he were the wisest in France." Unfortunately this is not preserved in the famous poet's works. Thony was also in great favour with M. de Montmorency, who often had him to dinner, joked with him, and treated him like a little king, and if the pages or lackeys displeased him he cried out and had them beaten, and was so malicious that many a time he pretended to be insulted, so as to have them beaten, at which he used to scream with laughter. The constable liked him because the king did, and he returned the regard, and called him father. Whenever anyone was in favour the fool sought him out, and made much of him, but in disgrace left him very soon, and without apology. The constable frankly acknowledged that he had experienced this in his own case, when in disgrace after the death of Henry, and confessed that the fool was the most complete courtier he knew. Thony evidently had method in his madness.

The first fool of Henry the Third was Sibilot, who had for governor Guy de la Groue, to whom we find an annual payment of twenty crowns for the duty. From this fact we infer that this fool was somewhat idiotic. In many places goings

* ALL THE YEAR ROUND, New Series, Vol. 32, p. 328, "Triboulet the Fool," and Vol. 33, p. 114, "Rabelais and Brusquet."

are called Sibilots, and it is a very nice question whether they gave their name to the fool or took it from him. The bibliophile Jacob conjectures that the Poet Royal, Dorat, who latinised himself into Auratus, acted as godfather, and christened the fool from "Sibilus." This supposition, at any rate, whether true or not, has the merit of ingenuity. As the name of Caillette had been already employed as a synonym for a man without brains, the same use was made of this one. Agrippa d'Aubigné, relating that M. de Candale embraced Protestantism for love of the Duchesse de Rohan, calls him a little Sibilot, and Bouchet tells us of a witty Sibilot who arrived at Poitiers late at night, and on the guards asking how he called himself, replied that he didn't call himself, it was other people who did that. To judge from the *Satire Ménippée*, it was evidently considered that a fool was an integral part of the royal establishment; a speaker asserts that the Duke of Mayenne needed only troops and Sibilot to be king. In 1588 we find an entry of fifty crowns to Massac, a doctor of Orleans, for several journeys by order of the king to tend Sibilot for a wound he had received, which renders it possible, if not probable, that the fool met with a violent death.

We now arrive at the most famous of the court fools, and most probably the one best known to English readers, for he figures conspicuously in a favourite romance of the great Alexandre Dumas, which has been translated under the title of *Chicot the Jester*, or, the *Lady of Monsoreau*. He is also introduced into the same writer's *Forty-five*, which we believe has not been turned into English. We need hardly tell the reader that Dumas has fully availed himself of the privileges of the romancer in his portrait of the fool; he has taken an inch of fact and lengthened it with ells of fancy; but nevertheless one may get a very fair idea of the times from it, and certainly in a much more pleasant way than by turning over musty old books and papers.

It is not known for certain whether the name of Chicot is real or a sobriquet. Some writers assert that it was his own, and that he had a right to prefix to it the noble particle "de"; others, however, will have it that it was a nickname, and point out that the word is still preserved as meaning "a bit of a broken branch," and also in the Gascon patois "chic" means something of small value, and in Spanish "chico" means little. The professional

name, therefore, may refer to his small stature. Be this as it may, it is agreed that Chicot was a Gascon gentleman. Brought up in the household of Brancas Villars, he was intended for the profession of arms, and when his energies were directed into a different channel, he still preserved his original inclination, being very fond of fighting. For some obscure reason he was at deadly feud with the Duke of Mayenne—because he had been beaten by the noble, say some; because the two had been rivals in a love-affair, say others. D'Aubigné tells us that Chicot had an ardent desire to kill or be killed by the duke, and to that end had five horses killed under him in two years. He first served the faction of Lorraine, and took part in the massacre of St. Bartholomew along with a brother, Raymond, afterwards killed at Rochelle. Brantome says that the two burst open the door of the Count of Rochefoucauld, whom Raymond killed. About this time he appears to have entered the service of King Henry the Third, as cloak-bearer certainly, for his name appears as receiving four hundred livres tournois salary at the head of the list of these officers. We also meet with an entry of seven ells of black taffety to make a dress for Chicot, the king's buffoon. As far as we can gather now, and infer from contemporary records, Chicot was no fool at all, but an extremely sensible man, who had the faculty of wrapping up his wisdom in foolishness, and at times felt the inclination to doff his usual armour, and don the motley. D'Aubigné tells us he was fool "when he liked," which may easily bear two meanings. We find the following in the memoirs of the grave Sully: "Early in 1585 the king, who had not then declared for the League, seeing that the Duke of Elbeuf was raising Normandy for it, ordered M. de Joyeuse to march on that province. The latter, therefore, arriving at Rosny, where Sully then was, took up his quarters in the house, whilst M. de Lavardin, who accompanied him, lodged at the other end of the village. To divert the company, Chicot, who was of the expedition, took it into his head to advise M. de Lavardin, whom he termed a fool, that Sully, that cursed Huguenot, had seized M. de Joyeuse on the part of the League. He therefore requested him to come at once to the relief of the prisoner. Thereupon Lavardin arms all his men, and rushes to the château, where he arrives just in time to be saluted ironically, and

bantered mercilessly by the fool for not remembering that the pretended treason was the most unlikely thing in the world." Henry the Fourth was very fond of Chicot, fool though he was, and thought he could do nothing wrong. When the Duke of Parma came the second time into France in 1592, Chicot spoke to the king before everybody :

"My friend, I see very well that all you do will not avail unless you become a Catholic. You must go to Rome and kiss the Pope's foot, and let everyone see it, or else they will never believe it. Then you must take plenty of holy water, so as to wash away the rest of your sins."

Another day he addressed him :

"Do you think, my friend, that the charity you have towards your kingdom should exceed Christian charity? For my part, I am pretty certain that you would give both Huguenots and Papists to the servants of Lucifer if you could be King of France in peace. They may well say that you kings are religious in appearance only." And still further: "My friend, take care not to fall in the hands of the Leaguers, for they would hang you like a dog, and write on the gibbet, 'Good lodgings to let for ever at the Crown of France and Navarre.'"

At the siege of Rouen, Chicot tried to meet with Mayenne, but in vain. However, after the assault on the quarter of the Count of Chaligny, of the House of Lorraine, and in the flight of the Leaguers, he had the good fortune to take prisoner the count himself, and presented him to Henry with, "Look here, gossip, I give you my prisoner." The count, realising who was his captor, and furious at the thought, seized the sword he had given up and struck the fool on the head. Perhaps the violence of the blow prevented his thinking of returning it. At any rate, De Thon tells us he had presence of mind to joke and rally his prisoner. But the wound proved serious, and he was taken to Pont-le-l'Arche to be tended. In the room where he lay was a dying soldier whom the priest would not confess on account of his serving a heretic king. Chicot accordingly raised himself from his bed and assailed the monk with both blows and words, but the exertion was too much for him, and he died fifteen days after receiving his hurt. In the *Satire Ménippée* we find allusion to this "High and mighty Count of Chaligny, who have the honour of having Mayenne as a cadet,

take your place and fear no more Chicot who is dead."

His successor was William Marchand, who had been an apothecary at Louviers, and whose naturally weak intellect, muddled by solitary reading and brooding over the preachings of the Leaguers, had been still further twisted by the blow of a halberd on the head at the capture of his native place in 1591, which made him literally and metaphorically cracked. There was no need to have a nickname for him, for at that time the names which were held in the lowest estimation were John and William. He therefore remained William, with the regular prefix of Master —no doubt in remembrance of his having been a member of a learned profession. As in the case of all the other weak-minded fools, there was continual war waged between him and the pages, whom he averred to be the offspring of the devil, whilst men were the children of Heaven. It was his habit to carry a staff under his dress, with which to dress down his young tormentors, crying out himself, as if it was he who was suffering.

The same game used to be carried on in the town where Master William was fond of straying, and where we may be sure he would not fail to be the butt and often to come off second-best, for in those days there was little pity for the weak in mind. He was in great favour with Henry the Fourth, who, whenever he was bored by a prosy speech, was accustomed to recommend the speaker to finish it with Master William. He appears, from late researches, to have survived his master and to have passed into the household of his successor. His name is often found in the writings of the times, but to bibliomaniacs especially he is very well known on account of the number of witty, scurrilous, and libellous pamphlets, published with his name as a pseudonym, and serving, in fact, the same purpose as *Pasquin* at Rome.

We now come to the last whom we shall notice, and the one who may be considered as the last official fool. This was L'Angely, a member, as far as can be made out, of a bourgeois family of Paris, who appears to have entered the service of the young Condé, who took him to the army in 1643, found him satirical and witty, and made him his fool and somewhat his friend. He was with the prince at Rocroy, and seems to have stopped with him till 1660, when Condé was reconciled with the court, after which date he entered the service of

Louis the Fourteenth. He was in great favour with the king, and the terror of the attendant courtiers, and was feared by everyone. Menage mentions casually that he was one day at the king's dinner, where also was L'Angely, but he did not address him as he did not want to be spoken of by the fool. The Count of Bantru, one of a very witty family, was at daggers drawn with L'Angely, who did not like him and never spared him—an illustration of the old saying, that two of a trade can never agree.

We find in the *Menagiana*, that L'Angely was one day in company which he had been amusing for some time with his buffoneries; to them entered Bantru, to the great joy of the fool, who addressed him: "Just at the right time, sir, to help me; I was getting tired of being by myself." Bantru's brother, the Count of Nogent, at the king's dinner was addressed by the fool: "Let's put our hats on, you and I are of no consequence." The unfortunate count took this very much to heart, so that it helped on his death, but Bantru more philosophically thought nothing of the shafts which he received, and no doubt returned them with even a little more venom. The curious reader may find some information on the fool in the notes to the first satire of Boileau, where the author, Brossette, appears to think L'Angely was really cracked. Other writers, and especially Menage, make no doubt that his faculties were in perfect order. That he had wit is undeniable from contemporary testimony, but unfortunately few of his sayings have come down to us. Whilst feared by some, he managed to make himself liked by others, and everybody gave him money, very possibly to buy his silence, till he managed to save some twenty-five thousand crowns, so that in one way, at any rate, L'Angely was no fool. It is unknown when he died, or at least laid down his bauble, very possibly about 1661; according to Brossette he had to leave the court on account of his tongue. He was the last official fool of the court of France. The profession had, in fact, long been an anachronism; the half-witted wretch who was the original holder of the bauble was no longer suited to the manners of an age continually improving in refinement and education. Neither king nor courtiers could expect to be entertained by the rough sallies of an uneducated mother-wit. And besides this, there was no occasion to have an official buffoon, volunteers in plenty

amongst the court would only be too glad to amuse the monarch in hopes of currying favour. In every circle, in fact, of whatever social degree, there is pretty sure to be some one, who, for his own satisfaction and the pleasure of the company, has no objection to play the fool.

RECLAIMED BY RIGHT.

A STORY IN FOUR CHAPTERS. CHAPTER I.

"I BEG your pardon, sir, but I fancy you have made a mistake; this is not a smoking-carriage."

The speaker was one of two ladies seated in a first-class carriage of the four p.m. express train at the Paddington Station, on the point of starting for Reading.

Her words were addressed to a swaggering young man who had entered the compartment just as the doors were being shut with the official slam.

You could have told at a glance that from top to toe he was a sham—a cheaply got-up swell, whose flash-and-dash was mere Brummagem. He wore a frock-coat, heavily braided, a pair of light grey trousers, red-striped socks, and patent-leather shoes. By daylight now, his clothes appeared somewhat shabby and worn; but by night, parading the gas-lighted streets, he might have appeared well, if not expensively dressed. He held in his coarse red hands a pair of lavender kid gloves, and displayed ostentatiously several gaudy rings. He wore a high hat, too, not of the best quality, but excessively shiny and fashionable in shape.

In a way, he was not bad-looking, for his eyes were clear and dark, and his nose, if rather too aquiline, was well chiselled. But the most conspicuous feature about his face was a heavy brown moustache, tightly curled and drawn out to two sharp points, and from beneath which gleamed a brilliant set of even teeth, constantly visible by reason of a perpetually recurring insolent smile.

He took not the slightest notice of the lady's remark, but seating himself in a corner of the carriage opposite her friend, the second lady, who was very thickly veiled, he threw up one foot across his knee, and continued smoking his cigar as if he had the compartment all to himself.

"I repeat, sir," went on she who had spoken before, "that this is not a smoking-carriage."

"Eh? Oh! Is it not?" he at length

drawled. "I beg your pardon, but the smoking-carriage was full."

He said this without condescending to give her more than the briefest look, and the never-failing insolent smile lent additional rudeness to his words.

The lady, however, with prompt courage, persisted.

"Indeed," she said, "I must beg you to put out your cigar, or I must have you made to do so. I shall call the guard."

She was making her way towards the window with this intention, when the whistle sounded, and the train moved out of the station.

Seeing she was too late, she resumed her seat, muttering as she did so :

"I never knew of such ungentlemanly conduct in my life !"

The veiled lady broke in with equal anger :

"No, indeed ; I never met with such impertinence ! I only wish my husband were here," she said, half-addressing the intruder. "It is lucky for you he is not."

Her voice was very peculiar, being strangely shrill and resonant, and the moment she spoke, the young man started and stared at her with an eager curiosity. Her veil was too thick, however, even for his keen eyes to penetrate, and when he had gazed for a minute or two unsuccessfully, he dropped his glance, and said with insolent indifference as he examined the cigar he had taken from his mouth :

"Dear me ! have you a husband ? How very interesting !"

"Yes, sir, I have, as you would find to your cost," was the impetuous reply, not made without causing a gesture of remonstrance from the lady who had first spoken, whilst she whispered impatiently :

"Be silent—be silent. Pray do not answer him !"

On this the fellow looked up again, and still smiling, went on :

"Ah well, I am sorry you do not like smoke. I thought all ladies liked smoke nowadays, but I am sure I do not want to annoy you. There, I will give it up," and letting down the window he flung away the butt-end of the offending weed.

The two ladies now moved to the farther corner of the carriage, and for some minutes neither spoke. The man, however, continued to regard them with undiminished curiosity, which the lady who had first addressed him did not fail to observe. A look of uneasiness several times

crossed her face as she furtively watched him. For she appeared to regard something in its expression which disturbed her beyond the mere offensiveness of his behaviour. A well, but plainly-dressed woman of seven or eight and twenty, she had, without being actually pretty, something very winning and bright in her whole bearing, to which her indignation lent additional piquancy.

Turning to her friend after a while, she began conversing in a low tone, in which there still lingered the remains of anger, judging by such words as reached the evidently attentive ears of the male occupant of the carriage. Above the roar and rattle of the train as it swept over or under the bridges, and through the ever-recurring smaller stations, he, from time to time, caught such expressions as, "most foolish of you"—"I cannot think how you could be so incautious"—"what danger you run"—"public place"—"struck by something you said"—"at such a time"—"most unwise."

These observations, however, were so broken and disjointed, that although the listener appeared deeply interested, it was questionable if he could infer from them anything beyond a continuance of the lady's ruffled temper. Nevertheless, they seemed to give him some sort of satisfaction, for, as he sat watching and listening, his smile betrayed a sinister gratification.

In this way the journey was continued, until the train stopped at Reading. Here the ladies alighted, as also did their fellow-passenger, and although they mingled with the crowd on the platform, he kept his eye on their movements, and seeing that they presently took their seats in a local train for some intermediate station farther down the line, he sprang into another carriage just as it was about to start. Twenty minutes' run brought this train to a standstill at Stokesly, a small village hard-by one of the upper reaches of the Thames, and there again the ladies alighted. For a minute they were the only passengers who did so ; but they had scarcely given up their tickets to the solitary porter at the wicket leading from the little platform into a country road, ere the young man was on their heels, but at a respectable distance.

"There is something extra to pay, I suppose," he said, as he came up to the gate. "My ticket is only for Reading. I did not know I was coming on here when I started."

"Eighteenpence, sir," answered the man.

"Do you know those ladies?" went on the traveller carelessly, as he searched for the money. "Do they live hereabouts?"

"Been staying here all the summer, off and on," was the reply. "I have heard their name, but I really forget it at this moment."

"Know where they live?"

"Somewheres down by the river, I believe, but I don't rightly know the house, though I have heard it was a furnished one, took for the season, I think, like many folks does in fine weather."

"When is the next train back to Reading?"

"Eight forty-five, sir."

"The devil!" exclaimed the young man, looking at his watch; "not before? Why, it is not six yet. I did not quite bargain for that. I shall lose my dinner. Never mind, I suppose there is an inn in the village where one can get a snack?"

Receiving a reply in the affirmative, he strolled leisurely off in the direction he had observed the ladies take. They were still in sight at the end of the road, and, as one of them looked over her shoulder and saw their obnoxious companion following, their pace immediately quickened, until in another minute they passed from his view at a bend in the way. He, too, now quickened his steps, and soon again caught sight of them, crossing a field foot-path, until again they disappeared beneath a dense avenue of trees. Then he broke into a run, which soon brought him to this spot, but only just in time to see the two figures, as they looked back, passing hurriedly through a door in a high wall, at the farther end of the avenue.

Having paused to take breath, he muttered to himself:

"Tried to give me the slip, did you, my beauties? Not if I know it. No, no, if I am right—and I could not be mistaken in that voice—this discovery may be worth the loss of a dinner."

He now proceeded slowly down the hill on which the avenue was situated, and arriving at the door, began, as it were, to take stock of the premises. He soon found that he was at the back of a small, old-fashioned, red-brick house, which, with some extent of thickly-wooded garden, the wall enclosed. Finding his way by a narrow path, he came to the iron gate at the front entrance, and the sound of rushing water, which here became audible, told him he was near the river. It was a rather gloomy, lonely place, some way from the village, the position of which, a

little farther down the hill, he could descry from the wreaths of blue smoke curling up among the trees in the quiet evening air. The peace and solitude of the scene were enhanced by the fast declining late September day, and by the deep shadows which already enveloped the narrow lane by which the house was approached. Elm Lawn was its name, carved in old English letters on the weather-worn, moss-grown stone portal; beyond this fact very little of importance could be noted. A light faintly twinkled in one of the upper windows, but not a living creature was to be seen; and, when the traveller had apparently satisfied himself as to the general lie of the land, he walked away towards the village, softly whistling some music-hall tune with an air of profound satisfaction.

He entered the small but cosy-looking inn which he was not long in discovering by the riverside, and calling for the most substantial fare which the house yielded, was soon carrying on a lively, skilfully-conducted inquisitorial conversation with the comely and buxom landlady as she served him with his meal.

CHAPTER II.

THE two sisters—for sisters they were—no sooner found themselves safe within the high-walled garden of Elm Lawn, and had secured the narrow door through which they entered, than an expression of relief broke from both, though it arose from very different feelings.

"I never knew such a fuss as you make about trifles, Lizzie," said she of the veil, as she threw it back over her bonnet; "you hurried me so that I have hardly any breath left. What could it signify if that man did see where we lived? And after all, I believe he saw us open the door."

"Yes, I am afraid so," said the other with a return of anxiety in her tone. "Hush! listen! there is someone coming down the hill now. That is his footstep I feel sure. Fortunately it is getting dark, and he may not be quite certain which way we went; and this house is so shut in that he will not learn much by looking at the outside."

Her sister was about to reply, when a gesture from the other arrested her. The footstep on the path outside now stopped, and a slight thud against the door indicated plainly that it was being tried. Presently the feet were heard retiring, and when they had quite died away, the lady resumed:

"Well, it cannot be helped, Margaret;

it was that man, I have no doubt; and it is all your fault. But I am astonished that you should not understand my reasons. You know how important it is that we should court no observation, and that our very safety for the future lies in our living in absolute obscurity. You cannot tell who that vulgar creature may be, or what his object in following us was."

"Oh, his object was simply what such horrid beings' object generally is. I ask you, was it likely he should know who we are, or anything about us?"

"No, perhaps not; but he may discover——"

"Well, and if he does? It is not very probable that he will be acquainted with any of our affairs."

"Pray Heaven he may not be! But I am so nervous lest by some mischance the unhappy step you have taken should reach the ears of those lawyers, that I fancy almost every stranger who looks at us may be connected with them."

Pursuing their conversation in this tone, the two sisters, after going through a door at the back of the house, entered a dark, low-ceilinged, oak-panelled room on the ground-floor, where an elderly woman-servant was preparing the tea-table. On seeing them she closed the shutters and lighted the candles, and retired after receiving a few hasty orders concerning the meal.

Directly they were alone, the ladies, whilst divesting themselves of bonnets and jackets, took up the conversation again almost at the point at which it had been dropped.

"Your indiscretion is beyond anything I could have imagined, Margaret; you must have observed that the man seemed struck by your voice, and the mention of your husband quite startled him. The more I think of it, the more I fear he knew you."

"I did not mention my husband's name, Lizzie; I only said I wished he was with us."

"Well, that was nearly as bad. It was the fact of your being married that appeared to interest him. Indeed, he said it did."

"It was only his impudence. What could he have to do with it? It is very hard to have a husband, and never to be allowed to mention him."

"Never be allowed to mention him? Why, you silly child, you can talk about him as much as you like to me at home here; but to speak out about him in a public railway-carriage was quite too foolish, especially when you are aware what a risk you run by so doing."

Miss Lizzie Boyston, as she uttered these words with considerable warmth, drew a chair to the table at which her sister was already seated, and began officiating with the tea apparatus. As she pursued her domestic task, the contrast which she offered to Margaret was very marked, for, whilst she presented a picture of energy and activity mingled with an air of great firmness and determination, Margaret, on the other hand, displayed a languid indifference in her demeanour, as well as in her pretty doll-like face, which betrayed extreme weakness of character. There was, nevertheless, an unmistakable family likeness between them: their brown wavy hair was alike, their complexions were alike, their deep-grey eyes were alike, and it was only in the mouth and chin that any strong difference existed. Margaret's full red lips wore a simpering smile perpetually, whilst Lizzie's were thin and straight, and seldom parted except when speaking. Her chin, too, was squarer and more prominent than that of her younger sister, and the merest glance was sufficient to show that Margaret could hardly have passed her teens, whilst Lizzie, as we have hinted, must have been verging on thirty. The hands of the latter again bore testimony, not only in their shape, but in their action, to the dissimilarity in temperament and nature existing between the sisters. Hers grasped and held everything they handled, the other's dallied with everything, and always appeared on the point of dropping whatever they took up. They had a caressing way with them also, especially when touching each other, and the wedding-ring and keeper were objects upon which the fingers of the right hand seemed never tired of lavishing a tender sort of affection.

"Now I will take up a cup of tea to the dear mother, and see how she is," said Miss Boyston presently, rising. "She will be anxious to know that we have got over our day's journey to London and back safely; but I shall not say anything to her of our unpleasant experience this afternoon, so mind you do not, Margaret; it would only worry her."

"Oh, I shall not think of mentioning it, I shall not give it another thought," was the reply, as the elder sister left the room. She was not away very long, but when she returned, her face had undergone a pleasant change, and where before there was anxiety and some anger written on it, there was now a look of infinite happiness.

"Oh, what do you think!" she cried. "Mamma has had a letter from Cousin Herbert, and he is coming down to spend a week with us. He will be here to-night in time for supper."

"Ah, then you will be quite happy," said Margaret complacently, still sipping her tea, "and perhaps you will understand better now what it is to have any one you care for near at hand, and what it is to be separated as I am, with no chance of my seeing my husband for I know not how long."

"Oh, you will see him soon enough, no fear," said Lizzie, a slight look of her former anxiety again stealing over her face. "As soon as he wants some more money he will come and look after you fast enough."

"Poor fellow!" sighed the other. "You are very cruel, Lizzie. I am sure he is very fond of me, and I am very fond of him."

"You are very fond of talking of him," was the rejoinder; "we all know that. I only trust no evil will come of it. One would think you were the only girl who had ever been married, instead of your having——"

"There, now—never mind, Lizzie; we will not talk any more about it to-night; it is of no consequence. You will be able to pour out to Herbert to-morrow your indignation with us both, as usual. And now I will go up and see mamma."

Carelessly gathering up her jacket and bonnet, and with an air of more impatience than her placid nature was accustomed to display, Margaret left the room as she spoke, whilst her sister heaved a deep sigh as she gazed after her. The bright look of joy which had temporarily suffused Miss Boyston's comely countenance was gone, and did not return for more than a quarter of an hour, but at the end of that time a loud ring of the deep-toned door-bell restored it on the instant, and springing out into the passage, she was, in another few moments, welcoming a tall, good-looking man of about her own age, with a cordiality that was not without its significance.

The first warmly-exchanged greetings and general enquiries over, Mr. Herbert Joyce, barrister-at-law of the Inner Temple, walked cautiously to the door of the little oak-panelled parlour, to ascertain if it were close shut. Finding that it was, he again sat down beside Miss Boyston, and in a lower voice proceeded to say:

"By the way, Lizzie, I am in hopes that I have come upon a clue as to the antecedents and early life of our

friend, Mr. John Crossmore, and although we cannot undo the mischief that has been done, still, it is well to know precisely with whom, and with what sort of man we are dealing. I have discovered, moreover, where he passes most of the time which he spends away from his poor, weak, foolish wife. He pays periodical visits to Jersey, but with what purpose I have yet to find out, and although I believe he does go to Manchester and the north occasionally, I doubt very much whether it is for the reason he professes—for, mind, we have only Margaret's word for it. It is all very well for him to pretend to her that it is the business of this Venezuelan silver-mining company which is some day to bring him such an enormous fortune, which takes and keeps him away for these prolonged periods, for, unhappily, she would believe anything anybody told her, if it flattered and pampered her little, selfish, vain nature. Otherwise she would not have believed this man when he swore he loved her. He reads her through and through like a book, depend upon it. Why, it is preposterous to suppose that he cares a button for her herself. Would any man leave a woman he really loved as he leaves her? Not yet married a year, and yet he goes away for six weeks at a stretch! This is the third time he has been away, is it not, Lizzie?"

"Yes, indeed," replied Mr. Joyce's cousin, as she drew her chair a little nearer to him. "I hope, Herbert, you will not want to run away from me in this fashion so soon after we are married."

"What do you think, dearest?" said the gentleman, and for a few minutes there was an interruption of a sort which can be imagined, ere he resumed his comments on Mr. John Crossmore.

"No, no," he at length continued, "it is nothing but Margaret's dividends which he cares for, and you will observe, Lizzie, that it is always just after they have been paid that he departs—of course we need not be magicians to know that he takes the greater part of them; indeed, she indirectly admitted as much to me when she first came back here on this present visit to her mother and you."

"It is all very deplorable," went on Miss Boyston, "as we have said scores of times; and I shudder to think upon what a feeble tenure we retain our income. Strive as we may to keep this unhappy marriage secret, it is sure to leak out, I am afraid, some day, and then, oh, what will

become of our darling mother? Ill as she is, it would be the death of her if we were again reduced to penury; the comforts we are now enabled to give her alone keep her alive, and then, again, our own marriage, Herbert, might be delayed for years."

The poor girl was here overwhelmed by emotion, and it was some time ere her cousin's soothing words and influence could pacify her.

"Nay, nay, do not despond, dearest," he said; "if the worst comes to the worst, you will never be allowed to suffer as you have done; your dear mother shall be cared for somehow. Remember, I am getting on fairly well, and though I have not a penny to bless myself with at present, I shall make a practice in time. Who knows but that I may get a seat on the bench some day, and that you will be a judge's wife? Meanwhile, we must hope for the best, and stave off the evil day, at least until I am in a position to look after my Aunt Boyston and her two charming daughters. By the present arrangement we have reduced the risk to a minimum. Crossmore will not divulge his marriage, he knows the necessity of secrecy too well. He is quite content to reap the benefit which he sought in it; and so long as he will continue to live quietly with his wife down in that remote corner of Cornwall, and he is able—as we vulgarly say—to collar her dividends, and so long as she will consent to come and stay with you as she does now, when he is away on these mysterious expeditions—so long as all this can be managed, there is very little chance of those pettifoggers, Messrs. Quickly, learning the real state of things. They will not think it likely that a woman would be such a fool as Margaret has been, and since she picked up and married this penniless fellow in that remote Cornish village, as far away from their clientèle as if it were in Kamtschatka, they are not likely to hear of it. Of course if they were to do so now, it would be disastrous—ruinous, I might say. But, dearest Lizzie, what is the matter with you?" continued the young barrister, the cheery hopeful tone of voice in which he had been lately speaking, suddenly changing into one of grave anxiety; "you are

trembling from head to foot, and your hand is stone cold."

"Oh, Herbert, I am very foolish, I dare say," she said, "but I have had a great fright to-day, perhaps about nothing, but I cannot get it out of my head, and when you speak of disaster and ruin being possible, it seems as if it might be at hand."

"How? Why?" asked Joyce eagerly; and then Lizzie Boyston recounted to him, in all its details, her afternoon's experience in the railway from Paddington.

Three days later the lovers were sitting together in the little oak-panelled parlour at Elm Lawn, under very similar conditions to those above hinted at. Every now and then their talk reverted as before to the marriage of Margaret with Mr. John Crossmore, and, as before, every now and then it was interrupted by a reference to matters with which he was no more concerned than we are. But whenever he was on the tapis, the two seemed to take a more hopeful view of the business than they had recently done, and, on the whole, were both in rather high spirits. Suddenly the post arrived, and, as Lizzie Boyston received from the servant a bluish, business-like looking letter, and she glanced at the superscription, she uttered a cry of despair. This was partly echoed by Herbert Joyce, as, taking the letter from her hand, he read the direction, which ran thus:

"For Mrs. John Crossmore, care of Mrs. Boyston, Elm Lawn, Stokesly, Oxfordshire."

And in the corner were the words: "Quickly Brothers, Solicitors."

"Good Heavens!" he cried, "they have found it out!"

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

A DRAWN GAME.

BY BASIL.

AUTHOR OF "LOVE THE DEBT," ETC.

CHAPTER XVII. BENEDICK AND BEATRICE.

"DICK"—Mrs. Tuck called her admirable nephew "Dick," when they were by themselves, but "Richard" in the hearing of the stately Ida—"Dick, I wish you'd be more serious in your attentions to her."

"I don't know what you call serious," replied Dick in an aggrieved voice, "this is my first to-day," looking at his half-smoked cigar remorsefully, as though it was that which really had reason to complain of his inattention.

His aunt had objected to his saturating himself with tobacco, as making against his chances with La Superba.

"It's a great sacrifice," rejoined his aunt, laughing, "and you've only to throw in your affections with it to turn the scale."

"They're not worth much, I dare say, aunt; but they're worth more than she can give in exchange for them. She's freezing."

"She wouldn't freeze you if you weren't yourself at freezing-point. You can't freeze warm water, Dick. Besides, it's all her manner. I used to think her freezing myself till I was ill, and that brought out all her affection."

"It's no use thinking of that till the hunting is over," said Dick, as if his aunt had proposed his falling ill there and then.

"I might come a cropper at the end of the season, and put my shoulder out, if you think it would fetch her. I can't do more than a shoulder," as though specifying the uttermost farthing he could go to in a bargain.

"And a cold shoulder, too. Well, Dick, if you think you've only to yawn for the belle and heiress of the county to drop

into your mouth, I've nothing more to say."

"My dear aunt, there's just one person who knows the value of her beauty and fortune better than either you or I, and that's the belle and heiress herself. She's as proud as Lucifer."

"Pooh! You men are so full of yourselves, that you've no eyes for us. She has the lowest opinion of herself of any girl I know. Even when she had the whole county at her feet, I couldn't get her to think anything of herself, I couldn't indeed. But now they're held off by the report that my poor dear husband means to leave his fortune away from her, she doesn't think herself pretty even. She's so sore and hurt about it that she'd be grateful for your attentions. And I can tell you, Dick, that gratitude goes deeper with her than love with most girls, and would soon slip into love besides."

Dick sat silent, watching lazily the curling clouds of smoke as they soared to the ceiling. He was ideally handsome, and a man of fiery energy and iron endurance in the business of pleasure—hunting, shooting, etc.—but five minutes of real business was insupportable and exhausting to him. Indeed, the only business his most flattering friends thought him fit for was matrimony. He was brought up to it, as a girl is, as the only prospect and profession worth taking into account in his case. Some heiress was to invest in his face, figure, and fascinating manners, and he was to be worn by her thenceforth as a jewel of gold. And if, as his aunt put it, he had but to yawn for some such heiress to drop into his mouth, he would have been married before this; but something more was necessary to secure a purchaser even for his attractions, and this something Dick was too easy-going to

upply. He was as little given as a Yankee hopman to press his wares on a probable purchaser. She might take them or leave them as she liked; it was more her lookout than his. In fact, Dick, though needy and reckless, was nevertheless no true fortune-hunter, for the simple reason that he never looked beyond the passing moment. He cheerfully discounted to-morrow, and would sacrifice years of future luxury to an hour of present ease.

Therefore he felt this business of the pursuit of Ida a bore. She was the most unapproachable and impregnable of all the maidens of his acquaintance. So far from the gates of the city being thrown open at his approach, he would have to sit down before it for a siege of many weary, dreary months. Now, as he could not urge this plea of boredom for raising the siege to his aunt at the risk of her anger, and at the cost of comfortable quarters, he had to fast about for some creditable excuses for his backwardness in the business.

It was this which made him plead Ida's pride in apology for the languor of his suit, and now, having been beaten back upon that point, he was in search of another, as he watched the smoke-wreaths melt to thin air above his head.

"They say Seville-Sutton first cannoned Ellerdale off the course, and then threw her over himself."

"They say!" exclaimed his aunt, too enraged to be reticent; "I say she refused Mr. Seville-Sutton and Lord Ellerdale within five minutes of each other. It was the night of our ball, and she told me all about it when we were by ourselves. Nothing I could say would move her to change her mind and accept either of them; and I can tell you, Dick, I said all I could, for I didn't know then that you had any thought of her—not that I know it now, either—but you led me to think so in your letter, and therefore, when the Don came the next morning to renew his proposal, I told him what my poor dear husband said about leaving his money to charities. I knew it was as good as putting it in the papers, and that it would keep the field clear of rivals for you."

"Faith, aunt, you've so well preserved the covers, that the game is tame. There's no fun in knocking a bird over that's beaten up to the muzzle of your gun. Let the poor thing have a chance."

"Poor thing, she's no chance against you!" nettled by a flippancy which

sounded profane when applied to her stately protégée.

"No choice, anyhow, or only Hobson's choice," replied the placid Dick, not nettled in the least.

"Well, Dick, it's easy to throw open the preserve, as you call it."

"It would be a bad business for me, aunt, I know, but only fair to the girl. It was of her I was thinking," with splendid mendacity.

His aunt took it for magnanimity in her adored nephew, though in anyone else she would have known it for mendacity.

Dick's indifference to a fortune of three thousand pounds a year and a girl whom he himself had christened—not in the least ironically—"La Superba," will appear incredible if we forget that his taste in beauty was neither exalted nor refined. If Ida had been pretty, forward, and a flirt, Dick would have met her half-way; but nothing was more antipathetic to him than this queenly, reserved, and superb beauty, whose glance, like Ithuriel's spear, seemed to pierce him through and through, and unmask his falsehood. It was not so at all. Ida was as unsuspecting as a child, and "thought no ill where no ill seemed." "By the pattern of her own thoughts she cut out the purity of those of others," yet somehow both Dick and his aunt were often made uncomfortable by her frank gaze, in which, as in a clear fountain, they saw not heaven reflected, but the dark shadows of themselves.

Therefore, Dick, to whom present ease of mind and body was everything, shrank from this discomfiting courtship. He felt as though he would have, metaphorically speaking, to walk on tip-toe, now and henceforth, in order to keep up to Ida's standard, and the mere thought of this was intolerable to a man of his easy-going disposition and principle.

Why on earth didn't his aunt get old Tuck to adopt him, Dick, a most eligible orphan, and then he might have had "the estate without the live-stock on it," as Sir Anthony Absolute sensibly put it? Dick felt rather aggrieved than grateful to his aunt, though he had the sense to conceal his disgust. She pretended to be so fond of him too, and she was fond of him; and if she had not been the deuce and all of a matchmaker, it's ten to one but she would at least have shared the three thousand pounds a year between them. The thing might be managed yet if he proposed for the girl and was refused. He would have a

kind of breach of promise claim for wounded feelings, blighted hopes, broken health, and ruined prospects.

As this brilliant idea of Dick's involved provision for the future at the cost of the keenest present discomfort, we need hardly say that it vanished with his cigar into smoke. But the base of this idea, the sense that he, Dick, was a cruelly ill-used person, remained. Indeed, Dick always had a heavy account against the world in general. Having done it the honour to adorn it, like the lily of the field, he ought at least to have been allowed the lily's immunity from toiling and spinning. Whence then these bills, and duns, and matchmakers? They meant, if they meant anything, that Dick should do something for himself, which was absurd. Now this idea of his—that all his creditors were deep in his debt—made Dick the most successful of "Coshers." Your beggar on horseback is your successful beggar. To those who want nothing we grudge nothing, but from him who wants everything we turn indignant away. Now Dick's light-hearted carelessness about the morrow, and his easy way of accepting a favour as if he were conferring it, gave his great friends the impression that he was independent of their hospitality, therefore they pressed it upon him with importunate generosity.

To his credit be it spoken he bore the persecution of his creditors with Christian fortitude, and forgave, and even forgot, his persecutors the moment their letters were burnt, or their backs turned.

On the present occasion, for instance, Mrs. Tuck had no sooner left the room—having been called off to look after her poor dear husband—than Dick proceeded to knock about the billiard-balls in happy forgetfulness of her scheme.

Mrs. Tuck's poor dear husband had taken to reading a grisly medical work which had upon him the mimetic effect a pantomime has on a child. He personated the most monstrous cases presented to him in that chamber of horrors, and then sent in a panic for Mrs. Tuck to rouse him from the nightmare.

Thus Mrs. Tuck was interrupted in this interesting conversation with her nephew by a summons from Mr. Tuck, who had just discovered in himself certain symptoms of a disease so new that it had only recently been invented by the most fashionable of the London physicians.

It took her some time to reassure him, so that on her return to the billiard-room she

found that Dick had gone for a gallop. Thereupon, being still in a matchmaking mood, she sought Ida.

Ida was in the small drawing-room, unusually idle, making a book the excuse of some bitter meditations.

Mrs. Tuck stood over the girl with her hand on her shoulder, and began the attack by a flank movement after her fashion. A sinuous approach to her subject had become an instinct with her—a survival from old days of difficulty and defencelessness. "A dog, whose great-grandfather was a wolf," says Darwin, "showed a trace of its wild parentage only in one way, by never going in a straight line to its object." Mrs. Tuck's sinuous mode of making for her object was an instinct with a similar origin, dating back from days when she had been harassed into habits of caution.

"Have you got through all your house-keeping, dear?"

"Why, it's nearly one o'clock, Mrs. Tuck! I got through it two hours ago."

"I don't know how it is, Ida, but you do a day's work in an hour, and glide through it as if you were going through the Lancers."

"I went to school to it, Mrs. Tuck, and it would have been my calling but for you," with one of her bright looks of gratitude.

"We're quits there, my dear. You've been a daughter to me, Ida, and more than most daughters are to their mothers," stroking the girl's hair affectionately. "But it's not the work you do so much as the way you do it which surprises me. If you had to sweep a room you'd do it like a duchess. Richard says he's always inclined to call you 'Your Grace.'"

"Captain Brabazon has a nickname for everyone, and I couldn't hope to escape."

"No, nor you haven't, dear, though it isn't 'Her Grace.' He always calls you 'La Superba' to me."

"The name for Genoa, isn't it, Mrs. Tuck? I remember your saying what a pretentious sham you found it when you got to know it."

"Well, he hasn't found you out yet, my dear, for his fear is that he'll never get to know you. You freeze him, he says."

"I can't imagine then what he's like when he thaws. He makes himself always so pleasant."

"My dear Ida, you must let me tell him you said so."

"Don't you think he knows it himself, Mrs. Tuck?" archly.

"Indeed, dear, I do not. I don't think him conceited at all—not at all; and you wouldn't think so either, Ida, if you heard the way he spoke to me this morning of you and of himself."

Here Mrs. Tuck paused for Ida's curiosity to hint its longing for the substance of this interesting conversation.

But Ida's curiosity was not so excited as to linger about the subject at all.

"I didn't mean to call him conceited exactly, Mrs. Tuck."

"My dear, I know what you mean quite well. You mean that everyone is well pleased with him, but that no one is so well pleased with him as he is with himself. But if you knew all that I know—the beauties, the heiresses who have flung themselves at his head——"

Here Mrs. Tuck tried to express by flinging up her hands an amazement at her nephew's moderation as great as that of Clive at his own in keeping his hands off the sumless treasures of India. She hoped to stir in Ida Millamant's ambition:

But 'tis the glory to have pierced the swain,
For whom inferior beauties sigh in vain.
If there's delight in love, 'tis when I see
That heart, which others bleed for, bleed for me.

But Ida, having a better opinion of her own sex than Mrs. Tuck had, was merely confirmed in her impression of the captain's coxcombry.

"But Richard has absurd ideas about fortune-hunting," Mrs. Tuck went on. "He thinks it degrading to a poor man to marry a girl with a fortune, no matter what he may give in exchange. He used to provoke me by always talking in this way the last time he was here"—very significant stress on "last," to suggest to Ida the inference that the disinterested Dick on his first visit was withheld from a proposal by the consideration of Ida's fortune—a consideration now out of the way.

But Dick, during that former visit, had been so successful in smothering the least symptom of his devouring passion, that Ida construed this significant hint to mean that Mrs. Tuck had then been match-making as usual, pressing Ida herself upon her reluctant nephew.

This happy thought held her silent, a silence which Mrs. Tuck of course misinterpreted into a meditation upon her nephew's magnanimity.

"It's your rich men," she resumed,

trying to clinch a nail she thought she had driven in, "it's your rich men, like the Don, who think so much of riches. They can be mean without the reproach of meanness; and they are," with sudden emphasis, inspired by a thought of another than the Don, her poor dear husband, to wit. "A poor man cannot afford to be mean, even if he were inclined to be. As for Richard, he runs into the other extreme to absurdity. Why should he try to stifle his love for a girl because she happens to be an heiress?"

Ida felt compelled to answer a question put to her so pointedly.

"But isn't that also to think too much of riches, Mrs. Tuck? To think nothing can counterbalance them?"

"To be sure it is, my dear," most heartily, happy in the thought that she was making immense way. "And that's just what I said to Richard when he was last here. 'It's you,' I said, 'who make too much of riches when you speak as if they were more than all you can give in exchange for them.' But he insisted that no one, not even you—not even the girl herself," hastily correcting herself, "would think his love disinterested if there were three thousand pounds a year in the scale."

It was hardly possible for Ida even to affect not to see through this frank disguise. Yet the perplexed lover who made the plaintive appeal:

Perhaps it was right to dissemble your love,
But—why did you kick me downstairs?

had less reason to doubt a well-dissembled passion than Ida. For Dick had not "protested too much" by coldness, moroseness, or the shunning of her society, but had been polite, pleasant, ceremoniously attentive, and fatally indifferent. Therefore, Ida, though not doubting in the least that Mrs. Tuck had some such conversation with her nephew, had not the least doubt either that her nephew had been gracefully excusing himself from the distasteful match this inveterate matchmaker had proposed to him. It was very humiliating, mortifying—more mortifying to Ida than to most girls—and she could not help feeling slightly irritated with Mrs. Tuck, and more repelled than ever from the lady-killing captain. She took her usual refuge in silence, on which Mrs. Tuck put the most favourable construction.

Great, therefore, was her disgust to find that the nett result of her morning's match-

making was the wider estrangement of Dick and Ida. Dick treated her

With courtesy and with respect enough ;
But not with such familiar instances,
Nor with such free and friendly conference,
As he had used of old.

And Mrs. Tuck rightly put Brutus's interpretation upon this punctilious politeness.

Ever note, Lucilius,
When love begins to sicken and decay,
It useth an enforced ceremony.

Ida, on the other hand, was more freezing than ever.

This check put Mrs. Tuck on her mettle as a matchmaker. Indeed, it was now doubly a point of honour with her to bring this thing about ; not only because she had taken it in hand, but also because she had told Ida, almost in so many words, that Dick was deeply in love with her. She felt it to be unfortunate that she had so committed herself, but there was no help for it ; or, at least, no other help than to bring Dick to Ida's feet. With this view she congratulated him, when next they were by themselves, on the progress he had made in Ida's good graces.

"Progress !" exclaimed Dick ; "she's gone down ten degrees below zero since this morning."

"My dear Dick, I should have thought you knew something of girls by this. When a girl first becomes conscious of a kindly feeling towards a man, she's so afraid of his seeing it that she doubles the distance between them. I thought her manner towards you to-night most encouraging."

"What ! Well, aunt, you ought to know. A little more such encouragement and she will cut me dead, and then I may venture to propose."

CHRONICLES OF ENGLISH COUNTIES.

STAFFORDSHIRE. PART I.

ALL the world associates Staffordshire with the Potteries ; it is Potland or Crock county in everybody's imagination, and although it may be possible to show that the county has other claims on attention, yet certainly the industry by which its fame is spread all over the world demands a leading position in its chronicles. The Potteries, as the district is called in proud pre-eminence, as though any other potteries in other parts were not worth consideration, although not an inviting region to visit, yet does not give the

idea of having been in any way spoilt by its pot-works, grotesque and ugly as many of them are. A wild barren tract of country has been reclaimed from its waste and desolation, and made the site of busy towns and thriving settlements, while in modern times we have seen a most fruitful and successful revival of what might have been deemed an almost lost industrial art.

The beginnings of the potter's art in Staffordshire are hard to trace. We may suppose that the excellent clay which abounds in the neighbourhood was turned to account by the Celtic tribes who pastured their cattle in the valleys, but in truth the remains of pottery in the tumuli and burial mounds of the district are not very numerous or important. And while in various parts of the kingdom evidences of extensive Roman potteries have been discovered, no direct proof, so far as we know, has been had of the existence of Roman kilns in Staffordshire. Probably the growth of religious houses in England gave the first impulse to the industry, for the Potteries seem to have been for centuries actually Tileries, where the inlaid tiles used for the pavement of churches and monasteries were made in considerable quantities. Still, the potters of Staffordshire turned out meritorious work in the early Norman days, and examples are extant of fine jugs marked with the horse-shoe, the badge of the Ferrers family, who may have been originally the barons Ferriers who presided over the ironworks of Normandy, and who had ceased to exist as a ruling family before the advent of the thirteenth century. But it may be guessed that the skill of our workers in iron and pewter, and of those who carved bowls and platters from the beech and ash, interfered very much with the potter's art. The Anglo-Saxon mind is impatient of vessels that easily break, and a slow and patient cookery in earthenware excites a feeling of contempt. "Why, these people cook their meat in basins !" was the exclamation of a worthy old English servant on coming into possession of a French kitchen, where the batterie de cuisine was chiefly of earthenware. And centuries back even people of distinction quaffed their drink from the black leathern jack or the pewter tankard.

And thus in the seventeenth century, while abroad the ceramic art had reached its apogee, in Staffordshire it was still in a rude and primitive stage, rather of decline than advance. Rude butter-pots of cylindrical

shape, which held twelve or fourteen pounds of butter at least, were the staple of manufacture, with homely mugs such as the people of Lancashire and Cheshire use to this day for their ale. These wares poor crate-men carried on their backs all over the country—over the northern part of the country, that is. But everything in the way of pottery, artistic, or elegant, or fine in texture, came from the Continent, the solitary exception being, perhaps, in that brown Toby Tossopot ware, often quaint and original in design, but of no high artistic merit. Other articles which collectors may meet with of Staffordshire make are the Bellarmine or 'long beards, those rotund jars with narrow necks and narrow bases, a form of vessel which sometimes may still be seen in use by workmen for their noon-tide refreshment.

Now if the Reformation had injured the potters by stopping the demand for tiles and plaques, the secret of making which was soon lost, the reign of Elizabeth brought a little compensation in the introduction of tobacco, and the consequent demand for pipes. There is something marvellous in the speedy conquest of the old world by the new habit. That people in England took to it freely from the first may be judged from the number of broken pipes that are found. These in the beginning are strangely small in the bowl, affording only a few whiffs of smoke for each charge of tobacco, and from their smallness they have got the name of fairy pipes, and some have even attributed them to the Romans; but they are good Staffordshire clay nearly all, and not earlier than Elizabeth's time. In the reign of James, notwithstanding the royal counterblast, the bowls of tobacco-pipes began to increase in size. The weed was no longer so highly priced, and people could afford more prolonged enjoyment. The more ornate and elaborate pipes came no doubt from Holland, but the ordinary pipe was from Staffordshire. The early pipe has a flat heel, so that the smoker may rest the bowl on the table, and on this heel the maker sometimes stamps his mark. "C.R." for Charles Riggs, a maker of Newcastle-under-Lyne, is one of the most noticeable. But as time went on the heel became a projecting spur, and the pipe assumed its modern form of a yard of clay, while our Dutch king and his followers are responsible for the still more capacious bowls and more prolonged whiffings.

The Dutch king brought other changes for the potters of Staffordshire. In his

train came two brother of the name of Elers, from Holland, who, prospecting among the Potteries, discovered beds of fine compact red clay at Bradwell and Dimsdale, where they erected kilns, and began to make fine red ware, in imitation of that of Japan. "Afterwards," writes Miss Edgeworth, "they made a sort of brown glazed stoneware, coarse and heavy, yet the glazing of these, such as it was, could not be performed without great inconvenience. They used salt, which they threw into the oven at a certain time of the baking of the vessels. The fumes from this were so odious, that the neighbourhood were alarmed, and forced the strangers to abandon their potteries and quit the country." Now Miss Edgeworth ought to have known something about these first introducers of new methods, as she was a direct descendant, on the mother's side, from one of the brothers Elers. But it seems hardly to have been the case that they were driven away by their neighbours, who were pretty well inured to smoke and smother, and stench of various kinds. The salt glaze which the Elers brothers introduced was welcomed rather than otherwise by the potters, who soon saw its advantages over the lead glaze then in use. But the brothers kept that process, as well as all the rest, a secret, till one of the native potters of Burslem, by name Astbury, devoted himself to the task of finding out their mystery. To effect this he assumed the garb and manners of an idiot, a notion utilised in these later days by the Silver King. The man hung about the works, doing odd jobs and making himself as useful as a "softie" could be, till the wily Dutchmen came to have confidence in him, and thinking a pair of hands without a head just the thing for their secret processes, took him into regular employ. The pretended idiot served his masters faithfully for two years or more. At the end of that time the workman retired, and set up as a master-potter, to the anger and indignation of his old employers. Perhaps it was the shame of having been "bubbled," or "bit," as the phraseology of that day would express it, that drove them away from their works, or, more likely, they found that at such a distance from their market the manufacture could not be successfully carried on. Anyhow, they removed about 1710 to Lambeth, where they associated themselves with a company of glass manufacturers, established in 1676 by Venetians under

the patronage of the Duke of Buckingham. In the course of a century, curiously enough, the descendants of Elers and Astbury came together, connected by marriage or ties of friendship with the Wedgwood family.

Soon after Astbury's adventure as an assumed idiot, he becomes the hero of another story, in which the discovery of the use of powdered flint in the manufacture of earthenware is accounted for. Again Miss Edgeworth shall tell the story, for, as a descendant of the Elers family, and an intimate friend of the Wedgwoods, she has a right to be heard. "There was a Staffordshire potter, whose name I forget. He stopped, on a journey to London, at Dunstable, in Bedfordshire, where the soil is flinty and chalky. He consulted the hostler of the inn about some disorder in his horse's eye. The hostler advised that powdered flint should be put into the eye, and for this purpose he threw a flint into the fire to calcine, that it might be more easily pulverised. The potter, who was standing by, observed the great whiteness of the calcined flint, and being an ingenious as well as an observing man, immediately thought of applying this circumstance to the improvement of his pottery. He first tried the experiment of mixing finely powdered flints with tobacco-pipe clay. He succeeded to his hopes, and made white stoneware, which put all the brown and coloured stoneware out of fashion."

We are now coming to Wedgwood's time, the Wedgwood family having been potters from the seventeenth century and perhaps earlier—master-potters that is, people of some means, and not without cultivation, in the homely and simple fashion of the times, so that Josiah Wedgwood began his work with all the advantages of early training and family connection. Once out of his apprenticeship, Wedgwood soon began his course of experimental manufacture, first bringing out his green glazed earthenware for dessert-services with forms of vine-leaves and fruit. At first Wedgwood was in partnership with one Wieldon, but soon set up for himself, first at the Old Churchyard, and then, to quote from a record in the potter's dialect, "an' arter that he flitted to th' Bell Workhus, wheer he put up th' bellconey for t' ring th' men to ther work, i'sted o' blowin' 'em together wi' a hurn." To explain this it may be necessary to say that up to Wedgwood's time it was the custom to summon

the potters together by blowing a horn, and that he was the first to make use of a bell for the purpose.

At the "Bell Workhus," otherwise known as Ivy House Pottery, Wedgwood made his first great success with his cream-coloured ware, which became known as Queen's ware, when good Queen Charlotte, with the full approbation of Farmer George, had graciously accepted a caudle and breakfast service at the hands of the courtly and far-sighted potter. The cream-ware became the fashion, and the pottery had more work than it could manage, so that presently Wedgwood removed to more roomy premises, known as the Black Works at Ridge House, afterwards famous under the name of Etruria. Here Wedgwood brought out one after another various important bodies—the black basalt, the jasper, the white stone, the cane-coloured ware, and many others. These ornamental substances were Wedgwood's great hobby, and he devoted great pains and expense to the reproduction in these favourite bodies of many of the masterpieces of classic ceramic art. The story of the Barberini, or Portland Vase, will be remembered. On the death of the Duchess of Portland, who had bought this vase from Sir William Hamilton, it was offered for sale; and Wedgwood, who had made up his mind to purchase it and reproduce it, bid against the reigning Duke of Portland up to a thousand pounds. At last the duke, seeing that the potter was fully determined not to be outbid, crossed over to him, and having bluntly asked what Wedgwood wanted with the vase, offered to leave it in his hands for as long as he wanted it, if he—Wedgwood—would cease to bid for it. What the auctioneer was about to let such a compact be carried out under his very nose, and under the suspended hammer, history does not tell us. Wedgwood produced fifty of his reproductions of the Barberini Vase, which came to the British Museum, it will be remembered, and was smashed by a lunatic many years ago, but was well repaired and is still to be seen there. These copies were in the favourite black basalt; but many other copies have since been made from the original moulds.

To carry out all this ornamental work, standing apart from the regular and more profitable business of making pottery, Wedgwood took a partner, one Bentley, a Derbyshire man in origin, who had settled in Liverpool as a Manchester warehouse-

man. Thus many of the Wedgwood reproductions of classic vases are marked "Wedgwood and Bentley." The firm established works at Chelsea, where many of the fine vases were painted by men who had learnt their art in the old Chelsea china works. At this period the firm had a commission from the Empress Catherine of Russia for a magnificent service, painted with English landscapes, with the condition that in each a green frog or toad should appear. Wedgwood objected to the condition, but was overruled, for it seemed that the service was wanted for the czarina's Grenouiller Palace, where everything bore the same device.

Since Wedgwood's days—he died in 1795—the history of the Potteries has been one of continued progress and advance. In the heart of the railway communications of the country, and with easy access to Liverpool and its shipping, Staffordshire now supplies half the world as well as the home-market with good and useful crockery. And Burslem, known as the mother of the Potteries, has taken the lead of many towns of greater importance in establishing a museum and library treating of its own ceramic art, where the history and progress of the Potteries may be studied on the spot.

The Potteries in the north, and the iron districts in the south of Staffordshire are separated by a tract of fertile and pleasant country, a land of manor-houses, and mansions, and secluded villages, and sleepy country towns, where ancient Watling Street traverses quiet scenes, and where nothing seems to have been disturbed since the days of the Romans, except that the ploughman, year after year turning his continual furrow, has buried deeper and deeper all the surface relics of the past. Passing over this quiet and fruitful district for the present, we will continue the industrial records of the county in its southern extremity, where Birmingham, locally in Warwickshire, forms the centre of a district which, if we were to recast our territorial divisions, would form the compact and homogeneous department of Hardweshire. Of these Staffordshire iron towns, the chief is Wolverhampton—a town which seems to have outgrown its local history. Its name, and that alone, has preserved the memory of a Saxon lady of high degree, the widow of Aldhelm, Earl of Northampton—the Lady Wulfruna, who founded here a college of secular canons, and whose name,

as a prefix to the original Saxon Hamtun, has been softened to Wolverhampton. The town was noted for ages for the skill of its workers in metals, and Dr. Plot, whose Natural History of Staffordshire is dedicated to the high and mighty Prince James, the second of his name, describes in glowing terms the skill of the locksmiths of Wolverhampton, and the perfection to which they had brought their art.

Then just on the border of the county by Birmingham lies Handsworth, with Soho, associated with the memory of the great inventor of the modern steam-engine. Then there is Great Barr on the slope of the lofty Barrbeacon, perhaps the central hub of England, where of old, it is said, the British Druids performed their mystic rites, and where in later days the beacon-fires of the Saxons gave warning of war or invasion to the very limits of the Mercian land. Here now stands the ancient mansion of the Scots, where once the gentle Shenstone wooed the muse; and Walsall's fine church is here in full view, and more to the left, among the smoke of furnaces, lies Wednesbury—the sacred berg of Woden, the grim Saxon Mars. All about, indeed, in the names of places may be traced relics of the ancient Teutonic worship, of which this district with the fiery beacon-mount in the centre was probably the chief seat. For the fierce Mercians clung to their ancient heathen worship long after the other Saxon kingdoms had been Christianised. Wednesfield, not far from Wolverhampton, where later on a great battle was fought between Saxon and Dane, seems to preserve the memory of some earlier field of slaughter dedicated to the god who delighted in the incense of human blood. But, in local parlance, Wednesbury is softened into Wedgebury, and it seems probable that Wedgewood was also once Wodenswood, and that there is thus a link, in the name of the peaceful father of the Potteries, with the memory of the flame-breathing god of the Mercian land. Some such war-god seems appropriate enough for the fiery district below, and for the men of Bilston, the brawny forgers; while Tipton, noted in the prize-ring for its Slasher, may be said to have carried the traditions of Woden into the brutal contests of modern days. Tettenhall, again, recalls the memory of ancient slaughter, where a great battle was fought against the Danes, and probably the swords and spearheads that flashed on that fatal field,

and whose rusted relics are found in the barrows that crown the neighbouring heights, were forged not far from where now the smoke and flames of a thousand furnaces cover the country with a pall of smoke by day, and a glaring crimson fire-canopy by night. For this Wodensland is now known as the Black Country, and well deserves its name.

Northwards of this district lies Cannock Chase, once the favourite hunting-ground of fierce Penda and the heathen Mercian kings. The wide forest is now reduced to a few scattered heaths of no great extent, but with some fine commanding brows from which the spires of Lichfield are seen rising from a fertile nook of wood and meadow.

One would like to know something about the famed St. Chad of Lichfield, who brought with him from Lindisfarne some faint savour of the early Celtic church, of Iona washed by the wild Atlantic waves, and of those Nature-loving recluses whose wanderings over hill and dale attract our sympathies perhaps more than the more dignified ways of their successors. St. Chad must have been a famous wanderer for his time, if he visited all the wells and springs that bear his name in various parts of the kingdom. But it is pleasant to find a real St. Chad's Well, and a homely but ancient little church close by, which is said to occupy the very site of his lonely cell, where at sunset reach the shadows of the tall cathedral spires. On the way, a pleasant lakelet reflects the fairy-like spires of the great temple on the hill above, and the white plumage of the swans that float on its surface. And here once a year come the children with garlands to dress the well of good St. Chad.

The sight of the cathedral on its mound, with the close encircling it, like donjon and outer wall, brings to mind the great event in Lichfield history, its famous siege. Lichfield was never a walled town, but the strong position of the cathedral—close suggested it as a place of arms for the king's forces at the outbreak of the civil war. And thus in 1643 the place was attacked by the Parliamentary Army under Lord Brook and Sir John Gell, while the close was defended vigorously by the Royalists under the command of Sir Richard Dyott. This Dyott, by the way, was of a well-known Staffordshire family, one of whose earliest members has the almost unique distinction of having been

mentioned by name by Shakespeare, Second Part of King Henry the Fourth, Act Third, Scene Third: "There was little John Doit, of Staffordshire, and black George Bare, etc." And it was one of these Dyotts who fired the most successful shot during the siege. For, as Lord Brook was reconnoitring the place, standing in the doorway of one of the houses of the town—a spot still pointed out—this Dyott, who, tradition has it, was deaf and dumb, fired a shot at him from an arquebus, so well-aimed that it pierced his brain and brought him dead to the ground. A great subject of gratulation was this to the garrison, and of especially good omen, as it happened, curiously enough, on St. Chad's Day. But the progress of the siege was not much hindered by Lord Brook's death, and eventually the close capitulated to Sir John Gell. After a while, however, the place was recaptured by Prince Rupert, and held out for the king till the battle of Naseby virtually put an end to the war.

A quaint little story of the times may here be interpolated, apropos to nothing, perhaps, but still giving a better notion of the actual spirit of the times than more dignified records:

"Captain Hunt, Governor of Astley Castle, and brother of the Governor of Tamworth, in February, 1645, sent a trumpeter to Lichfield for exchange of some prisoners, taken by Colonel Bagot.

"The colonel asked the trumpeter, 'What their officers would do if it pleased God to send peace upon this treaty at Uxbridge.'

"'Nay,' said the trumpeter, 'what will your officers do? for you are many of you younger brothers and will want employment; but our officers—let peace come when it will—have good trades to return to.'"

There is something pathetic in the result of the unswerving loyalty of the Lichfield folk, even as read in the usually prosaic churchwardens' accounts.

For instance, "A.D. 1643, paid for ringing when Prince Rupert went to Newark and at his return, one shilling and eightpence." "A.D. 1644, paid for ringing when the first news came from York, three shillings." That is, for the first news from Marston Moor, when the day seemed fairly won for the Royalists. And again the sad laconic entry: "A.D. 1650, paid for washing out the king's arms, five shillings." Again there is a world of eloquence in the sudden parsimony of the authorities: "A.D. 1658, to the ringing

September 6th, when they did ring for the Lord Protector, sixpence." The bells rang out merrily enough for the Restoration, and the ringers were well paid again with two shillings and four shillings. And then the whole story of the downfall of the Stuarts is told in this entry: "1689, for ringing on the day the bishops were acquitted, three shillings." The sad finale to all this loyalty appears in the last noteworthy entry: "1716, paid for ringing when the rebels ran from Perth."

And yet, even when the dynasty was changed, and the whole order of things was reversed, the authorities of Lichfield were staunch to their ancient intolerance, as appears from a curious presentment, dated March 8, 1743, made to the court at Whitehall, when dangers were apprehended from Popish plots on behalf of the Pretender. "The bailiffs and justices say that they have made diligent search throughout the city, and certify that all was peaceable and quiet; that there was no Papist, save only two or three women, or non-juror, in the city; neither have we amongst us any Quaker, or above two Dissenters from the Established Church of England, under any denomination whatsoever, and that the whole city was zealously attached to his majesty's person and government."

A stroll into the market-place of the town, where a feeble kind of market is going on—old women are sitting at little stalls under their umbrellas, and a few ducks quacking dolefully from out of a basket—discovers a statue of a seated figure in a ponderous chair, with its back turned to the old women, so that at the first glance nothing strikes the eye but this square chair-back, and the round shoulders of the figure that occupies it. But, on a more complete view, you recognise the features of the "great lexicographer," and are reminded that here is his birthplace. Samuel Johnson was the son of a bookseller here, and was educated at the free-school of Lichfield, but seems to have cast no very favourable eye upon the place. After Johnson left Oxford, it will be remembered, he settled for a while at Birmingham, where he married a widow with a good fortune for those days—some eight hundred pounds—and with this capital he returned to his native place, and set up a school at Edial Hall, about two miles distant. But he never seems to have had more than three scholars, one of whom was David Garrick, and with David he

presently set forth to seek his fortunes in London. There are sundry memorials of Johnson in the little museum at Lichfield—his teacup, that was so often replenished, and a saucer that, it seems, was so much of a fetish for him that he could not take his meals in comfort unless it were by his side.

The one great blot in the chronicles of Lichfield is that the city was the scene of one of the last, if not the very last, religious martyrdoms in England, for, in 1611, one Edward Wightman, of Burton-upon-Trent, was tried in the Consistory Court of Lichfield upon sixteen charges of heresy, and condemned. The king's writ to the Sheriff of Lichfield for his execution was dated March 9th, 1611, at Westminster, directing that he should be burnt in some public place within the city of Lichfield, and the barbarous sentence was soon afterwards executed; all which seems incredible, looking to the date—the days of Shakespeare and of Raleigh, the palmy days of literature and imagination. But the poor man was probably either an Arian or an Anabaptist—forms of heresy that the leaders of all the chief religious parties were equally ready to punish; and thus no voice, it seems, was raised against an atrocity which the spirit of the age would certainly have condemned.

"CHINESE GORDON."*

IN TWO PARTS. PART I.

THE author of this book—one of the most moving and heroic romances of real life ever given to the world—is specially qualified for his undertaking in that he is a kinsman of Gordon; and has, therefore, been able to command information not easily accessible to a writer less favourably placed. To a personal knowledge of Gordon's character and life, he has been able to add a close acquaintance with his private and official correspondence, and the disposal of a mass of documents of the highest significance. These are great advantages, and Mr. Hake has turned them to excellent account. But if in these respects his kinship was a benefit, in others it has been a drawback. For one thing it was a considerable curb to that freedom which as a man and a writer he must have felt to be appropriate to his great subject; with the result that many

* "The Story of Chinese Gordon," by A. Egmont Hake, author of "Paris Originals," "Flattering Tales," etc. With two portraits and two maps. London: Remington and Co., 1884.

episodes in the drama of Gordon's career are treated with a reticence which we must both admire and regret. Further than this, he has been checked to some extent by respect for one of the strongest points in Gordon's character—his almost morbid modesty. Publicity he loathes; and Mr. Hake in his preface apologises to him for giving his life to the world, not merely without his consent, but without his knowledge. To have asked his permission to publish, or to have let him suspect that a volume was being written of which he was the subject, would have been to court a passionate veto which could not be gain-said; consequently the world must have remained in that state of mingled curiosity and misapprehension, which existed prior to the appearance of this book. The author's courage in this matter indeed claims our gratitude; and it is impossible not to feel that in thus risking Gordon's displeasure, both he and those other members of the family who share, in one way or another, the responsibility of the work, have done a wise and useful thing.

Two books, previously published, have partially acquainted a certain number of people with the greatness of Gordon's character, and with some of the astonishing events of his career—to wit, *The Ever-Victorious Army*, by the late Andrew Wilson; and *Colonel Gordon in Central Africa*, by Dr. Birkbeck Hill. It was inevitable that the facts therein treated should be included in Mr. Hake's study; but in his hands they take clearer shape, fuller significance, and their proper places in the story of Gordon's life.

Much of Mr. Hake's material is new, and most of it bears very valuably on three of the most urgent matters now troubling the world. These are the war between France and China, the wild chaos in the Soudan, and the complicated dangers in South Africa. In this connection the book is full of teaching, and explains many things that, without it, were understood but dimly, if at all. And besides this it is particularly interesting because it contains a large number of Gordon's familiar letters. In the first half of the book, indeed, these and other documents are quoted at such length and so often, that in some degree they disturb the current of the narrative; and, from the literary point of view, this portion contrasts a little unfavourably with the rest. The second part, dealing chiefly with Gordon's work in Africa, is an excellent piece of writing, full of graphic vigour, and touched

with something of the wonderful romance of Gordon's life. Criticism aside, however, the book is, for the vast majority, one of absorbing interest. Whilst those who already know something of Gordon and his career will read it for the further light it gives them, and whilst many will read it for its teaching on current affairs, the mass of people will read it for its affecting and astonishing story, and for the sake of its hero, who, so simple, true, and strong, and so sincerely Christian, is one of the greatest men of any time.

Gordon's family has made a respectable figure in history. Ancestors of his fought on either side at Preston-Pans, and the son of one of them served in the Fortieth, Seventy-second, and Eleventh Regiments; fighting valiantly at Minorca and Louisburgh, and with Wolfe on the Plains of Abraham. This gentleman had three sons, who all entered the army. Two died in the service; the third, William Henry Gordon, who was born in 1786, entered the Royal Artillery, became a Lieutenant-General, and, by his marriage with a daughter of the late Samuel Enderby, of Blackheath, was the father of Chinese Gordon. Gordon's grandfather, on the mother's side, was a merchant and ship-owner of ability and enterprise. His ships took to Boston that unhappy tea, which, so to speak, fired the mine of the War of Independence. His boldness and tenacity largely aided the exploration and colonisation of the Southern Hemisphere. He ballasted his whalers with convicts for Botany Bay, and carried the earliest settlers to Australia and New Zealand. His ships were the first to round Cape Horn and trade in the archipelagos of the Pacific; and they were his whalers who first fished in Japanese waters, and did their best to build a commerce with the Middle Kingdom. Not every firm can show a record like to this.

Gordon's father was a man of memorable qualities. A good and cultivated soldier, he was firm and humorous, generous and robust. In his presence none could be dull, neither could the careless or neglectful escape his severity. His figure was striking; his individuality was strong; the twinkle of his clear blue eye was not to be forgotten. And Gordon's mother was no less remarkable in character and spirit. Cheerful under difficulties, which she conquered with no show of effort, she possessed a perfect temper, and a genius for making the best of everything.

Charles Gordon was educated at Taunton and at Woolwich. His early life presents little of note. Of no great physical strength, he appears to have done little either at school or at the Royal Military Academy. Still, we are told that in the record of these early years there was "always humour," and an occasional burst of fire and resolution. One incident only is given by Mr. Hake. Once during his cadetship he was told "he would never make an officer." He tore the epaulets from his shoulders and flung them at his superior's feet.

In 1854 he was gazetted an officer of Engineers; and, after a narrow escape from duty elsewhere, was ordered to the Crimea. Forced inaction at Balacava gave place to arduous and dangerous work in the trenches at Sebastopol. Of this period we shall only say that it is figurative of his later career; that he was slightly wounded, and more than once all but killed; that he showed himself a fatalist; and that his intelligence and zeal won the admiration of his superiors. Colonel Chesney, indeed, affirms that his personal knowledge of the enemy's movements was such as no other officer attained. He had already made his mark.

The Taiping rebellion was a climax of discontent and religious fanaticism. The province of Kwang-tung had become a Tom Tiddler's Ground for every sort of blackguard and pirate; it was rotten with secret societies; its suffering and rebellious people had learned the use of arms; the result was the worst of anarchy. Hereupon there came from enlightened Europe an individual who, possibly at risk of his head, preached the Gospel of Christ. He met an obscure schoolmaster, one Hung-tsu-Schuen, to whom he presented a choice collection of tracts, telling him, at the same time, that he, the obscure schoolmaster, would attain to the highest rank in the Celestial Empire. Schoolmasters, we know, occasionally cherish ambitions, and they are often very shrewd fellows indeed. But in these matters never did schoolmaster in any land equal Hung of China. He conceived a great scheme; he trusted to his ability to carry it out; time and people were ripe. Straightway he went forth, proclaiming that he had seen the Lord God Almighty, who had, he said, appealed to him as the Second Celestial Brother. The schoolmaster became the prophet—a prophet of freedom and vengeance, an agent of Divine wrath. Wise in his generation he stood forth in

a land of poor and oppressed, as the champion of the oppressed and the poor. Superior persons—who, it seems, exist in the Flowery Land as elsewhere—said in their mild way that he was mad. His madness centred in a determination to usurp the Dragon Throne, to exterminate the hated Manchos, and to restore to power and glory the degraded Mings, and he very nearly succeeded. The people, filled with hope and fire by his propaganda, flocked to his standard, and in a little while he and twenty thousand followers were stalking through the land, breaking idols in the temples, and effacing Confucian texts from the schools. Open war with the authorities duly followed, and Hung, full of ability and resource, had pretty much his own way; defeat swelled his ranks and his influence equally with victory. At last he formally declared himself the Heavenly King, The Emperor of the Great Peace, and at the head of hundreds of thousands of barbaric desperadoes—women and men together—pirates from the coast, bandits from the mountains, with a vast horde of scum of the earth, armed with knife and cutlass, decked in tawdry dress, and maddened on by flutter of gaudy flags and banners, he passed from province to province, robbery and murder before him, and fire and famine in his train. After a march of seven hundred miles he captured the city of Nanking, and there, under the shadow of the Porcelain Tower, set up a monstrous worship and tyrannic state, and made his kinsmen kings.

A conflict, desultory in its conduct, but unspeakably savage in its incidents, was waged between the Taipings and the Chinese authorities. The Pekin Government was powerful but supine, and hampered by interior politics and unfriendly relations with France and England. Its policy had been to drive the rebels towards the sea. The policy was bad, for the rebels had everything to gain from the cities of the coast—wealth, and munition, and arms. The Government discovered its folly, and with truly Celestial cunning, persevered in it. It saw that the foreign communities would defend themselves and their possessions, and thus the rebels would be caught between two fires. Shanghai, for long an asylum for the destitute and distracted fugitives from the stricken inlands, was soon attacked by the Faithful One himself; but he got a bad beating from the allied French and English troops. That was in 1860, in which year

Gordon, after doing valuable service on the frontier commission in Bessarabia and Armenia, left home for China. He was present at the sack and burning of the Summer Palace at Pekin, and there or thereabouts he remained as Commanding Engineer till the spring of 1862, and gained great knowledge of the country and the people. When the Taipings grew troublesome at Shanghai, Gordon was appointed to the district command. He drove them from the neighbourhood; and then—quiet for a few months—employed his time in surveying a thirty mile radius round the port. Every town and village in that radius, and we dare say every creek and path in that flat network of paths and creeks, became known to him, and the knowledge was presently of the utmost value.

The Shanghai traders had commissioned two American adventurers, Ward and Burgevine, to raise a foreign force for defence against the rebels. Ward was killed, and Burgevine being cashiered for corrupt practices, the British Governor was asked to provide a captain. The choice fell on Gordon. He did not rush upon his task, however, but asked that he might first finish his thirty mile survey, as it would be of the utmost service in the campaign. This granted, the temporary command was given to Captain Holland, of the Marines. This officer was overconfident and ill-informed; he was severely defeated in an attack on the rebel city of Taitsan. The Taipings triumphed over the "foreign devils," and Mr. Hake gives a curious account of the battle, written by one of the principal wangs or warrior-chiefs. The result was that Gordon left his survey unfinished, and hastened to the head of the Ever Victorious Army.

He determined to strike at the heart of the rebellion, and decided instantly upon a complete change of tactics. Petty operations, confined to a thirty mile radius, gave place to a large strategic plan, which involved the capture of a great number of rebel posts, ending with the great city of Soochow, the fall of which would crush the Taipings, and ensure the ultimate surrender of Nanking. In a few days he moved (by two steamers) about one thousand men to Fushan, on the southern bank of the Yangtze estuary. He landed under cover of an imperial force entrenched near by, and, watched by a large body of Taipings, reached Fushan on April 3rd, 1863, and attacked forthwith. A smart action ended in evacuation by the

rebels; thus Fushan was gained, and Chanzu, a loyal city hard pressed, ten miles inland, was relieved. The mandarins at the latter city received Gordon and his officers in state. Leaving three hundred men in the stockade, the young commander returned to headquarters at Sung Kiang. Here he set to work to discipline his army, which was terribly disorganised and demoralised. Under Burgevine and Ward it was customary to bargain for the performance of special service, reward being full licence to loot a fallen city. Gordon established regular pay on a liberal scale, and broke the habit of plunder. His force, three or four thousand strong, consisted of infantry and artillery: the infantry being armed with smooth-bore muskets, save a chosen few who were entrusted with Enfield rifles. The rank and file were Chinese; the officers all foreign, and mostly adventurers—brave, reckless, quarrelsome. The artillery—siege and field alike—was good; the equipment of it, and transport, and general provision for rapid movement, were complete; wherein we see the brain of the true commander. His army organised, his steamers and gunboats ready, Gordon was prepared to take the field.

A line drawn on the map from Taitsan to Soochow will pass through Quinsan. These, the three leading strongholds of the rebels, were connected by a road. Before the end of April, Gordon started with his little force to Quinsan, the centre of the three centres, and, therefore, the strategic key of the situation. On his way, however, he heard that the rebel commander at Taitsan had played a terrible trick on the Imperial forces. This treacherous rebel-chief made proposals of surrender to Governor Li Hung Chang, the Bismarck of China, as he has been called, and accordingly a native force was sent to take over the place. That force was treacherously imprisoned, and two hundred men were beheaded. On hearing this, Gordon instantly changed his plan, and marched rapidly on Taitsan. The rebel force numbered ten thousand, of whom a fifth were picked warriors, with several English, French, and American renegades working the guns. Gordon's army numbered three thousand of all arms. He laid siege to the place at once. The outlying stockades fell immediately; he then seized the bridges of the main canal; and, working round out of gunshot, captured the forts protecting the Quinsan road, and so isolated the town. He opened fire at six

hundred yards; in two hours the walls were breached; the moat was then bridged with gunboats, and the stormers under Captain Bannen crossed to the attack. A tremendous conflict ensued; fire-balls pelted the bridge, bullets the column, which, however, held its way into the breach, where it was met and repulsed. Then Gordon bombarded the breach for twenty minutes; once more the stormers charged, the breach was crowned, the city won; and in their hurry to escape the enemy trampled each other to death.

Gordon's troops had broken rule, and plundered. He punished them by marching straight to the siege of Quinsan before they could sell their loot. At Quinsan Gordon ordered the mandarins to front the walls with strong stockades, and man them with their own troops, whilst he marched his own men back to headquarters to reorganise. There he complained, in a general order, of laxity amongst the officers; and to improve the force, filled vacancies with certain officers of the Ninety-ninth Regiment, who had been allowed to volunteer. But when starting again for Quinsan, his majors struck for increased pay. Gordon refused point-blank. They resigned, with a request that they should be allowed to serve on the pending expedition. Their resignations were accepted, their services declined. The majors, finding there was "only one commander in that army," submitted.

The story of the capture of Quinsan is a sort of wonder. The place, as we have said, was the key to the military situation; it was captured in the most brilliant and original manner—particulars of which, however, must be sought in Mr. Hake's pages. It became the headquarters of the Ever Victorious Army, a change which caused a mutiny; for at Quinsan the men could not do as they did at Sung Kiang—sell their loot. The artillery refused to fall in, and threatened to blow all the officers to pieces, of which Gordon was informed by written proclamation. The non-commissioned officers were the instigators; he called them up, and asked who wrote the proclamation. They professed entire ignorance. Gordon replied that one in every five would be shot. They groaned, and Gordon noticing a corporal who groaned louder and longer than the rest, with his own hand dragged him from the ranks, and ordered two soldiers standing by to shoot him on the spot. It was done. Gordon confined the rest for one hour, telling them that within that time

if the men had not paraded, and if the writer's name were not given up, every fifth man among them would be shot. The men "fell in"; the writer of the proclamation was disclosed; he was the executed corporal.

Quinsan captured, it remained to invest Soochow, which means that a number of minor places clustering round it had first to be carried. But Gordon was hampered and disheartened—even to the point of throwing up his command—by the bad faith of the Chinese authorities, who broke their promise to pay his troops regularly, and even fired on them occasionally by way of proving their sense of humour. But Gordon had barely reached Shanghai, full of his determination to resign, than he heard that Burgevine, whose intrigue and bluster never ceased, had collected a well-armed band of foreign rowdies, declared for the Taipings, and seized a Chinese war-steamer, in which he and his desperadoes made their way into Soochow. In this Gordon recognised the birth of another and more desperate phase of the campaign. To resign was to abandon a suffering people not merely to the Taipings, whose dominion was one of blight and murder, but to a most unscrupulous and violent filibuster. Moreover, Burgevine had commanded Gordon's own troops, had plundered treasuries and temples with them; and they, with present pay in arrear, and future prospect of unlimited loot, were ready to desert to the enemy. Under these conditions, Gordon was hard pressed by the rebels at Quinsan and Kahpoo. "I am," he writes, "in a very isolated position, and have to do most of the work myself." He was, in fact, in the hands of traitors, and could trust no one. Desperate fighting continued, and some neat negotiations with Burgevine's "scum of Shanghai," which ended in their defection from the rebel cause; and in the latter, Gordon's great character shines in a curious way. The chiefs in Soochow suspected Burgevine, and imprisoned him; whereupon Gordon wrote begging them to spare his life. Yet all this while Burgevine was planning to cut up Gordon, and would have succeeded but for a companion, not less desperate, but infinitely more honest. In the multitudinous engagements, too, Gordon had always to be in the front, and often to lead in person. He would take one or other of his officers by the arm, and lead him into the thickest of the fire. He was never armed, and carried only a little cane,

which the natives called "Gordon's magic wand of victory."

Two heroic attacks and some curious negotiation ended in the capitulation of Soochow, whereupon occurred one of the most tremendous events in Gordon's career. The capture of Soochow, as we have explained, was the vital blow to the rebellion. The fighting which made it possible had all been planned by Gordon, and executed by Gordon's three or four thousand troops; yet no sooner was the end achieved than the Chinese authorities betrayed him. They refused to pay his troops; the rebel wangs, or warrior-kings, for whose lives he had pleaded, were treacherously murdered, and the fallen city was given over to be looted by the Imperial troops of Governor Li Hung Chang.

The murder of the five kings, with its accompaniments of treachery and cold-blooded horror, made a great impression in this country at the time. The faddists charged Gordon with the deed; but the faddists were confuted by the facts elicited in an official enquiry. Gordon, as we have said, pleaded for the lives of those men, and he was promised they should be honourably dealt with. We see him enter the fallen city of Soochow, alone, and innocent of what was being done; the gates are shut upon him by the Taipings; he is a prisoner for twenty-four hours among the thousands of men he had conquered. He escapes—to find the city sacked, and to weep over the mangled bodies of the kings for whose safety he had pledged himself. For the first time during the war he armed—armed and went forth to seek Li, the traitor. There is not the least doubt that if he had met his enemy he would have shot him on the spot. But Li had been informed of Gordon's terrible anger, and hid. For many days Gordon was "hot and instant in his trace"; but in vain. Back he came to Quinsan with his troops, whom he had ordered to assist in the pursuit, and there with deep emotion read to them an account of what had happened.

The massacre placed him in unparalleled difficulty. On the one hand the clamour of Europe to desist, on the other the call of his conscience and the mute appeal of the people to finish the work he had begun and so brilliantly carried on. "To waver was to fail." He ignored the world's opinion, and resumed command. Some "final victories" crushed the rebellion for ever; the provinces were

restored to peace and prosperity; the empire was rescued from an age of civil war. The destiny of China had depended on him, and he saved it.

Even to this day China, the treacherous thematter-of-fact, the mercenary, is grateful as well she may be. The campaign against the Taipings is one of the great chapters in military history; the part that Gordon played in it is altogether singular and heroic.

RECREATIONS OF MEN OF LETTERS

LITERARY men, as a rule, do not devote enough time to outdoor recreation. They are eloquent advocates of it in others. They lay down rules for the guidance of the public, but do not practise what they preach. Indeed, the question of recreation is very much like the question of stimulants. It is impossible to lay down rules for brain-workers, because it is impossible to know the temperament and circumstance of each individual case; but the condition under which most literary men work prevents them from taking even a little recreation. Their toil is pretty equal to that of the galley-slave, as Mr. Clark Russell says, in these days of severe competition, and some of them, in consequence, break down before their time. But many cases might be cited showing that excessive mental work is not hostile to health. The most striking is that of the octogenarian scientist, the Abbé Moigno, who seems to have chained himself to his desk. "I have published," he says, "already a hundred and fifty volumes, small and large. I scarcely ever leave my work-table, and never take walking exercise, yet I have not experienced any trace of headache or brain weariness, or constipation, or any other trouble." This case is no doubt exceptional, though the famous lexicographer, Littré, could put in a strong claim for the non-necessity of rest. For at least thirteen years, whilst he was engaged upon his dictionary, he never allowed himself more than five hours' rest out of the twenty-four, and he worked Sunday and week-day alike all the year round. Even whilst order was being restored in his bedroom, which also served as his workshop, he took some work downstairs. In the intervals thus employed he composed the preface to his dictionary. The great age which he attained—he was eighty when he died—is a striking proof of the enormous

amount of brain-work it takes to break down a good constitution, but the value of the testimony is lessened by the fact that on the completion of his dictionary he was left in a very feeble state of health.

It may be taken for granted that the men who can work uninterruptedly for years are few in number, and that those who neglect recreation pay the penalty either in sleeplessness, in a long illness, or in an early death. It was want of recreation which killed Bayard Taylor. His ancestors were long-lived, and nature had given him a stalwart frame; but the possession of extraordinary strength led him to neglect the precautions adopted by his less-favoured brethren. He did, it is said, the work of two able-bodied men every day. In consequence, his health gave way, and he was cut off at the comparatively early age of fifty-three. Hugh Miller's death was brought about by a self-inflicted blow, when reason reeled under the exertion of an overworked brain. Rosetti, after his wife's death, shut himself up alone amid mediæval relics in a large gloomy house. Instead of taking daily exercise or travelling, he sought relief from grief and sleeplessness in chloral, which became his familiar friend. Such cases might be multiplied indefinitely, and furnish a strong plea for the necessity of bodily exercise.

Anthony Trollope's recreation took a form not very common among men of letters. For many years of his life he gave a large part of his time to the recreations of a country gentleman. He loved to gallop across country, and to follow the hounds. Hunting, he said, was one of the great joys of his life, but he followed the pursuit under very great disadvantages. "I am too blind to see the hounds turning," he confessed, "and cannot therefore tell whether the fox has gone this way or that. Indeed, all the notice I take of hounds is not to run over them. My eyes are so constituted that I cannot see the nature of a fence. I either follow someone or ride at it with the full conviction that I may be going into a horse-pond or a gravel-pit. I have jumped into both one and the other." He regarded it as a duty to ride to hounds, and for thirty years he performed this duty. Mr. Trollope's sporting proclivities, as a matter of course, displeased Mr. E. A. Freeman, the enemy of field-sports in general. "Was it possible," asked Mr. Freeman, quoting from Cicero, "that any educated man should find delight

in so coarse a pursuit?" Alas! many educated men have found amusement in sports neither elevating nor gentle. Was not cock-fighting the favourite diversion of Roger Ascham? It is true the practice was condemned by some of his admirers, not because it was cruel, but because it was unscholarly. "Few, if any, in the sixteenth century," wrote Hartley Coleridge, "condemned any sport because it involved the pain or destruction of animals, and none would call the pastime of monarchs low. At a more advanced age, Izaak Walton, when in describing the best method of stitching a frog's thigh to a pike-hook, cautions you 'to use him as if you loved him,' never suspected that the time would come when his instruction would expose him to a charge of cruelty, of which there was not a particle in his whole composition, or in Roger Ascham's either. Angling is doubtless much fitter recreation for a 'contemplative man,' besides being much cheaper for a poor man than cock-fighting; but it is equally opposite to the poet's rule, which bids us:

"Never to blend our pleasure or our pride
With sorrow of the meanest thing that feels."

Hartley Coleridge did not deny that Ascham showed a strange taste, but said that it was a taste he had himself known to exist in men of the kindest hearts and most powerful minds. No doubt he had in his thoughts Christopher North, who was, unquestionably, fond of cock-fighting as well as of wrestling.

Mr. Trollope's methods of work and recreation closely resembled those of Sir Walter Scott, who, like Trollope, began the day's work at five o'clock. When the weather was bad, Lockhart tells us, it was the practice of Scott to labour all the morning; but the general rule was to be out and on horseback by one o'clock at the latest; while, if a more distant excursion had been proposed overnight, he was ready to start on it by ten; his occasional rainy days of unintermitted study forming a fund in his favour out of which he drew whenever the sun shone with special brightness. At that time the chief sport was coursing, of which Scott seems to have been very fond. Sometimes he exchanged coursing for fishing. Later in life his recreation took a form more in harmony with Mr. Freeman's tastes. "Planting and pruning trees," Sir Walter said, "I could work at from morning till night. There is a sort

of self-congratulation, a little tickling self-flattery, in the idea that while you are pleasing and amusing yourself, you are seriously contributing to the future welfare of the country." The American historian, George Bancroft, finds equal pleasure and relief in gardening. His garden at Newport is said to contain every variety of rose worth raising, and although he keeps a gardener, he understands all about their care himself, and engages in the work whenever he feels inclined. But his chief form of recreation is horseback riding. He is still engaged in revising the great work of his life, his history of the United States, and still begins his work at five o'clock. After a light breakfast he resumes his work, which he continues until one or two o'clock. At four he is mounted on his horse, and usually spends three hours in the saddle. Although in his eighty-fourth year, he declares that he has vigour enough to ride all day, and he attributes it entirely to the way in which he regulates his work and his recreation.

Unfortunately, every author cannot afford to keep a horse, but those who cannot, may find consolation in the medical declaration that walking is the best form of exercise. As a matter of fact, most of our best-known authors have been satisfied with this form of recreation, which is not without its advantages. It is safe, as well as favourable to contemplation. Wordsworth composed his verses whilst walking, carried them in his memory, and got his wife or daughter to write them down on his return. When a visitor at Rydal Mount asked to see the poet's study, the maid is reported to have shown him a little room containing a handful of books lying about on the table, sofa, and shelves, and to have remarked: "This is the master's library where he keeps his books, but," returning to the door, "his study is out of doors," whereupon she curtsied the visitor into the garden again. Landor also used to compose whilst walking, and therefore always preferred to walk alone. Buckle walked every morning for a quarter of an hour before breakfast, and said that having adopted this custom upon medical advice, it had become necessary. "Heat or cold, sunshine or rain, made no difference to him either for that morning stroll, or for the afternoon walk which had its appointed time and length, and which he would rarely allow himself to curtail, either for business or for visits." Equally careful was Longfellow in the preservation

of his health. He persisted in outdoor exercise, even when the weather was the reverse of pleasant. Both in the spring and autumn, when raw and blustering winds prevailed, he never omitted his daily walk, though he might go no farther than the bounds of his garden. Darwin was at one time fond of horseback exercise, but after the death of his favourite horse, some ten or twelve years ago, he never rode again, but preferred to walk round his garden, or along the pleasant footpaths through the lovely fields of Kent.

Walking was Macaulay's favourite recreation, but, like Leigh Hunt, he seems to have been unable to sever himself from his books. He once said that he would like nothing so well as to bury himself in some great library, and never pass a waking hour without a book before him. Certainly he could never walk without his book. "He walked about London reading; he roamed through the lanes of Surrey reading; and even the new and surprising spectacle of the sea—so suggestive of reverie and brooding thought—could not seduce him from his books." Macaulay reminds us of Thirlwall, who, whether eating, walking, or riding, was never to be seen without a book.

The favourite recreation of Charles Dickens was walking. By day, Professor Ward points out, Dickens found in the London thoroughfares stimulative variety; and by night, in seasons of intellectual excitement, he found in these same streets the refreshment of isolation among crowds. "But the walks he loved best were long stretches on the cliffs, or across the downs by the sea, where, following the track of his 'breathers,' one half expects to meet him coming along against the wind at four and a half miles an hour, the very embodiment of energy and brimful of life."

Carlyle usually took a vigorous walk of several miles, enough to get himself into a glow, before he commenced the day's labour. Whether the spirit moved him or not, he entered his workshop at ten, toiled until three, when he answered his letters, saw friends, read, and sometimes had a second walk. Victor Hugo loves to ride outside an omnibus; Carlyle was fond of riding inside. Apparently, neither walking in the streets, nor riding in a rickety, bone-shaking omnibus, aided Carlyle's digestion; for a more dyspeptic and ill-natured author never breathed.

It was he who called Charles Lamb and Mary a "very sorry pair of phenomena," and pronounced his talk "contemptibly small, indicating wondrous ignorance and shallowness." Never did men of such dissimilar tastes meet before; but they had one taste in common, and that was walking, for which Lamb confessed a restless impulse. How he loved London! Though he liked to pluck buttercups and daisies at times in the country, his sympathies were entirely with London. Like Dr. Johnson, he believed that when a man was tired of London he was tired of life, and he seems never to have grown weary of sounding the praises of that wonderful city, "London, whose dirtiest arab-frequented alley, and her lowest-bowing tradesman," he told Wordsworth, he would not exchange for Skiddaw and Helvellyn, James Walter, and the parson into the bargain. He loved not only the print-shops, the theatres, the bookstalls, but the crowds of human faces. "The wonder of these sights," he says, "impels me into night-walks about her crowded streets, and I often shed tears in the motley Strand, from fulness of joy at so much life." But his walks along that lively thoroughfare and elsewhere were not without their drawbacks. "I cannot walk home from office," he said, "but some officious friend offers his unwelcome courtesies to accompany me." In many of his letters he complains "of being a little over-companied," and the only way of escape from his tormentors was to walk into the country. He was not altogether free from them at Edmonton and Enfield. He seems to have been as fond of walking as Scott was of riding, and the prospect of an early release from the drudgery of the desk tempted him to enlarge upon the pleasure his favourite pursuit would bring him. He had thought, in a green old age, of retiring to Ponder's End, "emblematic name, how beautiful! in the Ware Road, there to have made up my accounts with heaven and the company, toddling between it and Cheshunt, anon stretching, on some fine Izaak Walton morning, to Hoddesden or Amwell, careless as a beggar, but walking, walking even till I fairly walked myself off my legs, dying walking!" Three years later he was released from the drudgery of the desk, and he then tells us that "Mary walks her twelve miles a day some days, and I my twenty on others." The change worked admirably, but only for a time. "The spur and discipline of regular hours

being taken away," remarks the Rev. Alfred Ainger, "Lamb had to make occupation, or else to find amusement in its stead. He had always been fond of walking, and he now tried the experiment of a companion in the shape of a dog, Dash, that Hood had given him. But the dog proved unmanageable, and was fond of running away down any other street than those intended by his master, and Lamb had to part with him a year or two later in despair." Lamb's wish that he might die walking was almost realised. Whilst taking his daily morning walk on the London road, as far as the inn where John Gilpin's ride is pictured, he stumbled against a stone, fell, and slightly cut his face. Erysipelas set in, and Lamb died after a day or two's illness.

The interest of a walk in the country is considerably enhanced by a taste for botany; but literary men know comparatively little of the science. Botanising was John Stuart Mill's favourite recreation. "His taste for plant-collecting," says Dr. Bain, "began in France, under George Bentham, and was continued through life. It served him in those limited excursions in the neighbourhood of London, that he habitually kept up the needs of recreation. I may be mistaken, but it seems to me that this taste belongs to a character joyous by nature, and, therefore, easily amused, or perhaps nothing more stimulating is to be had."

Recently, a new form of exercise has been commended to brain-workers by Dr. Richardson, who contends that tricycling will enable them to obtain the change of thought and scene which they need. Tricycles are, unfortunately, awkward machines to stew away, and cannot with safety be used after dark. Stabling accommodation for them is hard to find in London, as well as dear, and they are scarcely suitable ornaments for a drawing-room, or even a back parlour. Dr. Richardson stables his machine in the lobby of his house in Manchester Square. An arrangement of this kind is convenient for the rider, but would be tolerated by few wives. As everybody knows, the learned doctor is a good deal heavier than Fred Archer, yet he can travel with ease fifty miles a day on his tricycle, and, therefore, he is enthusiastic in his praise of tricycling. The popularity of the pursuit is shown in the crowded state of all the roads out of London through eight or nine months of the year, and is becoming popular with literary men.

Some men, however, need neither a horse nor a tricycle. They are so exceptionally constituted as to be able to do with very little outdoor recreation. They find rest in change of occupation or of subject. Sir John Lubbock, for instance, banker and politician, occupies his hours of recreation in studying the habits of ants and bees. Southey found recreation in changing the subject of study. He had six tables in his library—one for poetry, one for criticism, one for biography, and so on; and he said that so long as he could shift from one to the other, he could work for fifteen hours a day easily. But if he were confined to one subject he said that he should have broken down. Leigh Hunt followed the same plan. Sir Richard Alison declared, with much enthusiasm, that the composition of five-and-thirty large volumes in less than as many years, simultaneously with the discharge of exhausting and continual judicial duties, left him at the age of seventy nearly as strong as he was at five-and-twenty. The secret of this circumstance was to be found, he is persuaded, in the diversity of the objects which occupied his mind. Half of each day, he says, is devoted to law, and half to literature; but his residence compelled him to walk six or eight miles a day. Either singly would, he considers, have ruined his health, or terminated his life; but the two together saved him. Recreation to an active mind is, he points out, to be sought not so much in rest as in change of occupation. "I never found," he adds, "that I could do more, either at law or literature, by working at it alone the whole day than by devoting half my time to the other. The fatigue of the two was quite different, and neither disqualified for undergoing the opposite one. Often on returning home after sitting twelve hours in the Small Debt Court, and finding no alleviation of the sense of fatigue by lying on the sofa, I rose up and said: 'I am too tired to rest; I must go and write my history.'"

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A STORY IN FOUR CHAPTERS. CHAPTER III.

THE dingy offices of Messrs. Quickly Brothers were in a dingy street in the neighbourhood of Finsbury Square, and judging by the appearance of the people constantly passing in and out, it was easy to divine that the business of the firm was not what is called high-class. Nor was the personal appearance of the occupants of

the untidy rooms calculated to alter this opinion. From the head and only surviving partner, as he sat at his paper-strewn writing-table in the inner apartment, down to the dirty little errand-boy, perched on a high stool at a desk established on the landing outside the clerks' office, there was a sordid, money-grubbing, hard-dealing look about everybody, by no means comforting or reassuring to business applicants who might happen to be, as one may say, on the wrong side of the hedge.

Mr. James Quickly, sole representative of the firm, was a tall, thin, bony man of sixty, with a bald head, fringed with long iron-grey hair, and mingling with shaggy unkempt whiskers and beard of the same doubtful hue. The bland, kindly tone which marked his speech, and the soft words which it was his custom to use, were so palpably at variance with the whole aspect of the man, that none but the most inexperienced could have been deceived by them. The effect of the keen, piercing eye, the compressed mouth, and the cruel feline jaw, was not to be effaced by any subtlety of manner or speech; and when he looked up from his desk, on the occasion when we have to make his acquaintance, and spoke, he suggested nothing so much as a purring but savage cat.

"A very good day's work that of yours, Master Martin; about the best you ever did in your life, or ever will do," he said, addressing the flashy-looking young man who figured so conspicuously in the railway journey already described.

"Yes," was that individual's reply, as from his stool at an opposite desk he yawned indolently, and displayed his white teeth rather more than usual. "Yes, I flatter myself it was a fair stroke of business, and it makes good what I always say, that if a fellow has got his wits about him, he can easily combine business with pleasure—that is, if he goes upon my principle of putting pleasure before business. Here is an instance, as you must admit, uncle—if I had not been up to my own little game that afternoon, and, taking French leave, cut the office at three instead of six to go down to that little dinner-party Tommy Dowse had asked me to join at his riverside residence at Reading, I should not have come across and spotted Mrs. Margaret Nethercombe, née Boyston, otherwise Mrs. John Crossmore."

"Oh, I must admit you have reason in what you say so far," replied the uncle; "and idle dog that you are, since it is as it

is, I cannot contradict you, only it is precious lucky for you, my boy, that it happened when it did, for I should not have stood your goings-on here much longer, I can tell you. But there! we will not say any more about that now; you will be able to do as you like for the future, and pretty ducks and drakes you will make of your share of the money when you come into it I have no doubt! But that is no affair of mine. It will not affect my share in the good-fortune. A man may do as he likes with his own. By the way, just let us have a look at old Nethercombe's will. We have a copy of it in that box there. I want just to see exactly what it says. Rather hard lines to doom a good-looking girl of two-and-twenty to celibacy for the rest of her life. Let us see."

Mr. James Quickly purred, as it were, whilst slowly uttering these last words, as if the sympathy which they expressed must convince everybody of the kindness of his heart. The young man slipped off his stool, and doing his uncle's behest, laid before him a legal-looking sheet of foolscap docketed, "Copy of the last will and testament of Edward Druce Nethercombe, of Peckham, in the county of Surrey," etc.

"Ah yes—here we have it—just so," presently continued Mr. Quickly, running his eye rapidly over the paper, and then reading aloud: "Humph! yes; last will and testament of me, Edward Druce Nethercombe," etc. Yes, 'I hereby devise and bequeath the whole of my estate, real and personal, to my wife, Margaret, for her sole use and benefit. I give an annuity of four hundred a year to be paid out of my estate to her mother, Mrs. Mary Boyston, of Harwich, in the county of Suffolk,' etc., 'and I give an annuity of four hundred pounds to be paid out of my estate, to her sister, Elizabeth Boyston, of the same place; and I hereby appoint my cousins, James and William Quickly, solicitors,' etc., 'to be executors and trustees of this my will. But in the event of my wife, Margaret, marrying again, after my decease, the whole of my estate, with the exception of certain legacies hereafter named, shall at once revert to my said cousins, James and William, etc., and the annuities above-named shall cease, and no longer be paid to her mother, Mary Boyston, or her sister Elizabeth,' etc. Yes—yes," went on the reader blandly, "that is the pith of it, as I thought, and although I am the last person who ought to grumble, I say again, they are very hard conditions."

"Hard conditions, uncle! What nonsense you talk!" broke in young Martin Quickly half angrily, but laughing his insolent laugh. "The idea of a man coming into all that money, and calling the conditions hard! There really is no satisfying some people," he added; "but just look here; read the legacies out, uncle, or, at any rate, read mine; it is the pleasantest reading I ever found."

"There's the copy; you can read for yourself," replied the elder man, rising and standing with his back to the fire; "you had better learn it by heart."

Mr. Martin Quickly immediately followed his uncle's advice, for, taking up the paper, he read aloud, half-a-dozen times over, the delightful fact that, "To my first cousin once removed, Martin Quickly, I bequeath the sum of five thousand pounds free of probate duty."

Meditating for a minute or two, the head of the firm presently enquired:

"And you really mean to say, Martin, that you discovered Mrs. Nethercombe, alias Crossmore, by her voice?"

"Yes," was the reply. "I never heard such a strange croak in my life; I should have known it again anywhere. One of the advantages of having a good ear."

"But I did not know you had ever seen her," said the uncle.

"Neither have I," said the nephew, "and I only heard her once before."

"And when was that?" asked Mr. James Quickly.

"Oh, about three years ago, I suppose; just after she married old Nethercombe. She and he came here on some business. I was in the outer office, and heard her talking, and I thought to myself, 'What a wonderful voice, I should know that again anywhere;' and I was right, you see, uncle, I did know it again; but I did not see her any more than I did the other day. I was only told who it was when they were gone."

"And you actually remembered it again after all that time," remarked the uncle, "merely from her talking in that railway-carriage?"

"Yes," was the answer; "but I do not know that I should have thought so much of it if she had not swaggered about her husband as she did; that is what seemed to give me the tip somehow—all on a sudden—for I have always been on the look-out for her coming this caper over us some day."

"And the sound of her voice, and a

reference to her husband, aroused your suspicion that it was she?" enquired Mr. Quickly.

"Yes—at any rate that it might be; so I determined to mark her down, and put you on the scent."

"Well, it does you credit, if a man can take credit for mere luck," said the elder lawyer, resuming his seat, and beginning to purr as he went on meditatively: "The sly little minx to go and get married without letting us have a hint of it for more than nine months. It would serve you right, you puss you, to make you and your mother and sister refund the last dividends; but they are doubtless all spent ere this, and it would be throwing good money after bad to attempt it, wretched paupers that you will all three be again now that we stop the supplies. One cannot get money out of a stone, not even when it is a Boyston-e!"

Mr. Quickly laughed unctuously at his own joke, and his nephew shouted aloud at it.

"Capital, uncle, capital!" he said; "what a thing money is! How it sharpens a fellow's wits! But, I say, tell us how you have verified all my suspicions? I mean, how came you to make cock-sure she was married, so as to be able to write and tell her we knew?"

"Oh, very simply," said Mr. Quickly. "We put our friend Doubledon, of Scotland Yard, on the trail, and he soon ran the little fox to earth—discovered the whole affair."

"Well, tell us all about it, do," said the younger man; "you know I have never taken much interest in business affairs—they are not much in my line. Beyond just hearing that old Nethercombe, when he was nearly seventy, married the daughter of some naval captain, or rather the daughter of the captain's widow, living at Harwich, and that our branch of the family was consequently done out of the money, I knew very little. Of course, at his death, I heard of his queer will. He executed it, I was told, only a few days before he died. How did he first come across these Boyston people?"

"Oh, the old idiot was at Harwich in his yacht one year," answered the elder man, "and met the girl, I suppose, somewhere about. She was only seventeen, I believe, and he fell desperately in love with her, and married her. There's no fool like an old fool—like an old fool, you know, Martin."

"Except a young fool, I should think," was the response; "she must have been as great a fool to marry him with that difference of age between them. I wonder her people let her do it; but it was the coin, of course, they went for."

"Of course it was, for the mother and two daughters were just as poor as church mice—genteel paupers. The old lady was a great invalid, and there was a lot of rubbish talked, I remember, on their side, about the daughter sacrificing herself for the sake of the mother, and so on, and old Nethercombe made settlements on them accordingly, as you see by his will here," said Mr. Quickly, purring, and softly patting the paper in front of him, as a cat pats a mouse too cruelly maimed to move.

"Yes," continued the nephew, "I see and then he does not like the thought of his money going to a second husband, and so he puts a stopper on any little game of that sort! Well, they are bowled out now anyhow. But I want to know what Doubledon has discovered—where was she married? and who is Crossmore? He will be rather sold! They are all fools together it seems to me, unless he be a knave as well."

"That is not unlikely," went on the uncle; "but they are hard conditions, I repeat. As to Doubledon—well, he has ascertained, as far as we know at present, that, about a year ago, old Nethercombe's young widow goes on a visit to some unsophisticated clerical friends, right away in Cornwall, leaving her mother and sister at Harwich, where they had always continued to live. In Cornwall she picks up and there and then marries, this Mr. John Crossmore, a gentleman concerned in some mining operations. Here is a copy of the marriage certificate, dated just ten months back. I suppose her mother and sister knew nothing of it until it was too late, or they might have interfered. Probably the young widow guessed as much, and kept it dark, for of course, at her time of life, love is everything and money nothing; but it is to be hoped Mr. Crossmore has got some for he has married a beggar, as he will find. As you say, Martin, they seem all idiots together, for one would have thought he would have taken the trouble to learn the condition of his predecessor's bequests. But I dare say he was very much in love and she, being the same, what did it matter? However, the mother and sister seem to have been frightened when they heard of it, for, you see, they slipped their

cable and left Harwich, and took this little place at Stokesly, so as to keep out of the way on the quiet, without our knowing it, and as I have always been in the habit of paying in their dividends to their bankers, we should not have heard of their move—perhaps for years—but for your lucky discovery, Martin; indeed, I had ceased to think about them. I looked upon the case as hopeless, for I never imagined young Mrs. Nethercombe would have been such an idiot as to get married again, however much she might have been in love. You would have expected that she would have done anything rather than reduce her mother and sister—to say nothing of herself—to penury again. Really, Martin, the firm ought to hold themselves much indebted to you!”

“Yes, I think they ought,” was that gentleman’s reply; “which being the case, I will get some luncheon with your permission, uncle;” and putting on his hat, he left the office.

CHAPTER IV.

SAD and sorrowful was the change which overtook the Boyston household, soon after the arrival of that fatal letter from Messrs. Quickly Brothers.

The pretty little country home in the out-of-the-way Oxfordshire village, with all its snug, quiet, rural beauty, had to be exchanged for a cheap London lodging in Kennington, with all the penurious and comfortless surroundings indigenous to such a location and the attendant circumstances. Nearly three months had elapsed, and Christmas was fast approaching. The poor invalid mother had been utterly prostrated by the removal from Elm Lawn, and the withdrawal of all those delicacies and comforts rendered inevitable through the change of fortune brought about by her youngest daughter’s second marriage.

“It is, perhaps, but just retribution,” urged Miss Boyston to her lover one evening, as they were sitting together in the little parlour adjoining the invalid’s room. “You know, Herbert, we were retaining the money under false pretences. We had no right to it; but Heaven knows you and I had but one thought, and that was only to secure for the last days of our dear one there, a home, in which she might end them in decency and comfort. If you and I have ever had any selfish thoughts as well about our own marriage, and in which this money played a part, we are rightly punished now.”

“Do not speak of it, Lizzie,” said Joyce

indignantly; “you bear it more bravely than I can, and take a higher view of it all. I dare say you are right, dear Lizzie, and my legal training ought to make me as sensitive to this question as your own Christian heart does; but the fact is, dearest, in the face of that abominable, iniquitous will, my very sense of right and wrong gets twisted. I do not think I realised, until we were obliged to bring your poor mother away from Stokesly to this miserable place, as the most convenient thing to do, how truly heartless, selfish, and atrocious are the conditions of that old curmudgeon’s will. To doom a girl, a mere child, as Margaret is still, to remain unmarried for the rest of her life, was bad and cruel enough; but to make her nearest and dearest suffer also—well, really,” exclaimed the young barrister with increasing warmth, “it is beyond anything I ever heard of, and seems to make what, before the law of man, would be a fraud, appear but an act of duty before the tribunal of a higher power. I swear, Lizzie, I should have had no compunction in keeping the secret to the very end, if it had been possible. How long was it after old Nethercombe’s marriage that he executed this second will?”

“Very shortly before his death,” answered Miss Boyston; “he was always wickedly jealous of his wife, and when he knew his end was near, he made this new will. He sent for me, and told me what he had done, and why; he said that by reducing us to poverty once more, he would make assurance doubly sure that she should not marry again. The will he signed on the day he was married had no such conditions in it; this one seems to have been quite an afterthought, prompted by the arch-fiend of jealousy.”

“Yes; well, there was nothing to prevent his doing this, of course,” went on Joyce, dropping his vehement tone to one of dejection. “As he had made no independent settlements upon his wife or any of you, as he ought to have been made to do, and as he should have been made to do if I had been at hand to advise, there was nothing to prevent his revoking his first will. By Jove! it makes my blood boil! Was it not enough for you and your mother to consent to this horrible sacrifice on any terms, but that you should still have been left to the mercy of this old brute’s caprice? It is too, too dreadful. Well, it is more than ever necessary now that I should make some money to help you along with, for your mother’s poor little pension is

barely sufficient to keep one body and soul together, much less three. How you ever managed to jog along as you did before old Nethercombe turned up is a marvel."

"But surely, Herbert," protested Miss Boyston, "Mr. Crossmore can be made to maintain his wife? She, at least, should not enter into our ways and means."

"Of course he must support her, if he has anything to support her upon, which is doubtful," answered Herbert; "but first of all we must find him, and that does not appear easy. It is two months since Margaret has had any tidings of him, and he is not to be heard of at either of the addresses he gave her. You have seen that her letters to him are all returned by the post-office. There never was a more flagrant case. Depend on it, he is nothing but a low adventurer, as I anticipated when I found out the little I did about him. He only married that poor foolish child for the sake of her money, and now he has got wind of the true state of affairs, he disappears. Do you know, Lizzie, I have it strongly in my mind to run over to Jersey myself, and do a little private detective service on my own account! It would be far less expensive than employing a professional, and as I know, from previous information, that he was often to be heard of there, I have a great mind to go and see what I can do in the business myself."

Infinite was the talk which this suggestion raised. Arguments for and against the plan were urged from every point, and finally it was decided that Herbert Joyce, armed with some additional particulars concerning this mysterious husband of Margaret's, should go himself to Jersey, and try and bring the fellow to book.

It is not the purpose of this narrative to follow the young barrister through all the devious and difficult paths by which he ultimately achieved his object. We need only look in upon the family circle once more in order to bring the story of this second marriage to an end.

The occasion is a propitious one, for it is Christmas Eve, and Herbert Joyce has returned from his expedition to the humble lodgings in Kennington. There is a radiance about his earnest face as he is welcomed by her to whom his presence is always as a ray of light, which contrasts forcibly with the gloom and sadness pervading the little home.

"I have only just obtained the final piece of evidence necessary to complete my case, Lizzie," said Herbert in reply to

the enquiry why he had not written to warn them of his coming, "and you could not have received a letter sooner than you have received me. I might have telegraphed you certainly, but I preferred bringing you the good news in propria personâ."

"Ah, then, you have found Mr. Crossmore, and he is willing——" began Lizzie Boyston; but her lover stopped her by a gesture as he said:

"Restrain your curiosity, dear Lizzie, and just let me tell you the main facts as briefly as possible in their proper order; they are very few and simple. I discovered that Mr. John Crossmore is a fiction altogether—that is, he has no real existence, for the name we know him by is only an assumed one. I rather suspected this, and verified my suspicion by means of the photograph of the individual which you gave me out of Margaret's desk before I started."

"Hush! she has not missed it," said Miss Boyston, raising her finger, "and she is in the next room with the dear mother."

The lovers were sitting as usual near each other, with their backs towards the folding-doors—which were shut—of the mean little parlours, and as he glanced over his shoulder the young barrister went on:

"Well, it does not matter, she will have to hear it all directly; but you shall tell her if you please. To proceed. At the post-office, at the bank, and at various other public and likely places at St. Heliers, where I made enquiries, no one had ever heard the name of Crossmore, but at the registrar's office, when I showed the photograph, as I always did when I put my question, a knowing young clerk cried out with perfect conviction:

"'Why, that's Mr. Turndale, or, if it is not, his ghost must have sat for the picture!'

"'Then,' said I, 'who is Mr. Turndale, and where does he live?'

"'Difficult to say who he is,' replied the clerk; 'he is to and fro here a good deal, something in the commercial-traveller line, I suspect—turns his hand to anything that may turn up, and he lives at St. Brelades across the bay.'

"This answer suggested to me in a moment the possibility that I had come upon my man.

"'Ah!' I said, 'you do not know who he is. That is asking too much in a place like Jersey. Strangers here are not always what they appear to be.'

"'No,' said the clerk, 'we have a good many aliases here at times, but I do not think but what this person's name is his

real one anyhow, seeing he was married by it, here, in this very office.'

"Lizzie, my darling," cried Mr. Joyce, unable any longer to continue his story in its proper sequence, "in two words, this scoundrel was already married when he first met Margaret, and is no more her husband than I am. It is a fact," hurriedly went on the speaker, disregarding Miss Boyston's startled expression of surprise; "I cannot tell you all the ins and outs of the way in which I proved it, and how I identified Mr. John Crossmore with this man Turndale; but I did. He was married at that very office to which a kindly fate guided my footsteps. I saw the record in the registrar's book, with the fellow's signature, James Turndale, in the handwriting of John Crossmore unmistakably, and the date three years ago—that is, rather more than two years before he contracted this bigamous alliance with Margaret.

"I found my way to St. Brelades, and after some trouble found the man—confronted him, and convicted him out of his own mouth, before his own wife. He had no suspicion at first as to what I was driving at; but when I suddenly mentioned the name of Boyston, and accused him point-blank of his crime, he was so thunderstruck that he could not deny it. I never saw a man so bowled over in my life—a mean, contemptible hound, who, when he partially recovered himself, began entreating that we should not prosecute. He actually went down on his knees to me, and the poor little woman, his wife, with a baby in her arms, when she realised the truth, did the same. Directly the Christmas vacation is over I shall put the case in legal train, and Messrs. Quickly Brothers will have to hand back all old Nethercombe's property, for it belongs to Margaret and you, and to no one else."

In their excitement over this rapidly and incoherently delivered recital the two lovers had drawn closer together than ever, and had not observed that the folding-door behind them had been softly opened, and that Margaret Nethercombe, emerging from it, had overheard the whole of the latter part of what Herbert Joyce had been saying.

Altogether it was about as singular a case as the gentlemen of the long robe had been engaged in for a considerable time.

The fact that it never came into court has, with the assistance of fictitious names of people and places, permitted its narration in the present form, and that it was not left to the decision of a judge and jury was due to the skilful management of it by Mr. Herbert Joyce. Anxious to shield his fair friends from all unnecessary annoyance and exposure, he contrived, by the aid of counsel's opinion and many little dexterous and intricate manœuvres, so to show Messrs. Quickly Brothers that they had not a leg to stand on, that after the first steps had been taken in the action, those distinguished solicitors made no attempt to defend it.

Thus "reclaimed," and now "held by right," by Margaret Nethercombe and her mother and sister, the property has never again been jeopardised by any imprudent act on the part of the young widow. The deception practised on her by the unscrupulous adventurer Crossmore, alias Turndale, alias anybody else, seemed to read her a salutary lesson, for the weak and foolish girl has developed into what it may not be too much to call an uncompromising champion of woman's rights. Her old character has undergone a mighty change, and on all platforms where the most advanced arguments are used for the emancipation of the sex from the tyranny of man, she stands conspicuous as a fluent orator, whose remarkably shrill voice lends additional venom to her utterances, whilst the erewhile undecided hands have assumed a vigour of action which adds not a little intensity to the superabundant gesticulation. That her logic is not always of the soundest is to be excused, remembering her hard experience, and Herbert Joyce and his wife are only too glad that so harmless an outlet has been found for the spirit of revenge to which the treatment she had received not unnaturally gave rise.

The revulsion of feeling which came over her at first inspired her with a fierce desire to prosecute her deceiver and punish him with the utmost rigour of the law, but as he was carefully allowed to decamp, she was easily dissuaded by her relatives from this course, and by degrees she readily adopted that in which she has become a shining light, whilst Herbert Joyce, Q.C., Esq., now that he is in a fair way of being able ultimately to confer on his wife the dignity of a judge's wife, can afford to smile at the vagaries of his sister-in-law.

THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR

ALL THE

ROUND

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CHAPTER XVIII. DICK HAS GREATNESS THRUST UPON HIM.

DICK considered The Keep capital quarters on the whole, but it had two drawbacks — Ida's unfortunate presence, and the still more unfortunate absence of his dog. Dick loved his dog, a fine Irish retriever, better than anything and anyone else in the world, and he expected it to be taken into a friend's house as part of himself.

Now, Mr. Tuck had a horror of dogs in the house, in part out of regard for his furniture, and in part through fear of hydrophobia. Even Mrs. Tuck's Nan had been banished in the very first days of their marriage. Therefore, Dick's red retriever Bran, which all its life long had been used to sleep at the foot of his master's chair by day and of his bed by night, was pitilessly and peremptorily banished to the stables, where he made night hideous with his howls. The servants, who slept, or tried to sleep, at that side of the house, got to hate the poor brute, and showed their hatred by many a kick and cuff, and by sometimes neglecting, in Dick's absence, to give it food or water. This unaccustomed ill-treatment, neglect, confinement, and separation from its master, told so terribly on the wretched creature, that Dick at last made his mind up to quit The Keep, and seek some more hospitable shelter for himself and his dog.

When he announced this resolution, Ida was very much surprised and pleased by the really deep feeling he showed in speaking of his dog. She took herself roundly to task for her misjudgment of Dick, and for her inhospitable treatment of him, and determined

that, if he could but be persuaded to stay, she would show her repentance in her amended manners. She did what she could to persuade him to stay by promising, to Dick's amazement, that she would herself look after the dog in its master's occasional absences. Nothing could have so reconciled Dick to Ida as this surprising promise of hers to look after his first friend, and he showed his gratitude by the fervour of his acknowledgment of it, though he explained, at the same time, that it was not so much its ill-treatment as its separation from its master which made it miserable, and made necessary his departure.

A little later that morning, Ida, standing at a window in the breakfast-room, arranging some flowers in a vase, saw Bran being hotly pursued by a groom with a heavy weapon of some kind in his hand. She threw up the lower sash, stooped, stepped out on to the lawn, and hurried towards the dog and its pursuer to save it from punishment. Midway, a sudden certainty that the dog was mad rooted her to the ground. She had heard so much about hydrophobia lately, and so much that morning of the misery the wretched dog had gone through, that this idea of madness at once occurred to her and paralysed her. The dog was panting, foaming, running, not as to or from anything, but mechanically, and as though possessed. Ida stood straight in its path, arrested, and as if turned by a spell to stone, in the attitude in which the idea of her danger found and fixed her — one hand still holding some flowers, the other loose at her side, one foot advanced, and the other in part raised for the next step, fear shown only in her fixed eyes, parted lips, and marble face. She was looking, not so much at the dog as at a

horrible succession of pictures of death by hydrophobia, which flashed in a moment, vivid as reality itself, through her brain.

In another moment Dick stood between her and this death. He had not even seen Ida, and had no suspicion of the dog's madness, but, catching a glimpse through the laurels of Bran being pursued, he rushed out to save him. Then, too late, he saw his danger, as the dog was unmistakably mad. Being a man of iron nerve and of ready resource, he made his mind up, in the moment that remained to him, as to what was best to do. He had in his hand a stick, not heavy enough to brain the dog, and with this he struck it with all his force across the knees, and brought it down; then he caught and held it by the throat with both hands.

Here the groom came up with a gun, which he would have fired before but for the fear of shooting Ida.

"Put the muzzle to his ear and fire," cried Dick.

But the man, not having Dick's nerve, feared to fire so near his hands.

"If you'll leave hold on him, sir, I'll fire before he can raise his head."

"Why can't you fire now?"

"I daren't, sir, with your hand touching the muzzle."

"Why, you fool—well, look out then."

Here he let go his hold of the dog, and the groom fired, but the dog was too quick for him. Dick's hands were hardly off his throat when he got his head from under the muzzle of the gun, and by a sudden and savage snap buried his teeth in his master's arm. Then, too late, the groom fired and disabled him, and by another shot put him out of pain.

While Dick was undoing his sleeve-link to have a look at his bitten arm, he saw Ida for the first time. She, of course, imagined that he had rushed into the danger to save her, therefore the fear that he had been bitten was horrible to her. With a trembling hand on his arm, and such a haggard look of anxiety in her face as even the easy-going Dick did not soon forget, she faltered out:

"You've been bitten."

"Oh, it's nothing, thank you. The skin's only just broken. I shall burn it out and be right enough."

Hereupon, Ida, for the first and last time in her life, fainted. The strain upon her had been intense. In that single minute she had realised in her vivid imagination the approach of this frightful

death, her escape from it, and the cost of that escape.

Dick sent the man to the house for help, which, however, was at hand before he reached the door. The discharge of the gun under the windows had brought out half the household, and Mrs. Tuck among the rest. To her Dick committed Ida, referring her to the groom for an account of the business, as he was naturally in a hurry to cauterize his arm. The groom, being also under the impression that the captain, seeing that the dog was mad, and Ida in danger, had flung himself heroically between them, gave this account to Mrs. Tuck, when she could spare attention to it on Ida's coming to herself.

"He's been bitten!" gasped Mrs. Tuck.

The groom "didn't rightly know"—knowing right well, but beginning to realise his own responsibility for this bad business. Mrs. Tuck bid him saddle a horse at once and be ready to ride at life and death speed for the doctor, while she hurried into the house to find Dick. She found him in the kitchen—where, at this time of the year, was the only fire—scientifically cauterizing the bite with a red-hot poker, to an accompaniment of shrieks, groans, and ejaculations of pity and horror from the fascinated cook and kitchenmaid.

"Oh, Dick!" groaned Mrs. Tuck, sinking sickened and helpless into a chair by the door.

"I'm all right, aunt," in a voice whose coolness was not affected. He had no "nerves," and little thought for the morrow, and believed that the virus had probably been strained out by his coat and shirt-sleeve, and at any rate had been intercepted by cauterization. "I'm all right, aunt; it's only a scratch, and my coat kept the poison out. I've burned the bite besides, as I knew you'd make a fuss if I didn't," laying the poker down and pulling down his shirt-sleeve.

"Jane," gasped Mrs. Tuck, "tell Ticknor—the doctor."

Jane rightly interpreting this spasmodic message, rushed off to send the groom for Dr. Kirk. But the doctor was already half-way up the avenue on one of his frequent visits to the valetudinarian Mr. Tuck.

Being shown, on his arrival, into the kitchen, where Dick was administering brandy-and-water to his half-fainting aunt, he examined the wound, pronounced the cautery imperfectly done, and an imperfect prophylactic in any case, and insisted on excision.

Dick rather grumbled at having his bridle-arm whittled away at this rate, but shrank from the operation only on that ground; though it had to be performed without chloroform, with which the doctor was of course unprovided.

Dick certainly would have preferred chloroform, if it was to be had, as he was glad to inhale laughing-gas when he had a tooth to be drawn. He was the last man in the world to court unnecessary pain, but he bore what there was no help for with stoic fortitude. Physically, in fact, there was no finer specimen of a man in England than our captain.

He bared his arm, and watched the doctor deftly cutting out the piece without the movement of a muscle or the quivering of an eyelid, greatly to the advantage of the operation and to the admiration of the surgeon.

"Your nephew is made of iron, Mrs. Tuck—made of iron inside and out," he said to that lady in Ida's hearing. "There's not the least fear of hydrophobia in his case, and just because there's no fear of it; for I believe half the cases come from nervousness. But Captain Brabazon doesn't know what nervousness means. He held his arm while I cut out the piece as still and steady as I hold this glass. There was no need whatever of chloroform," regarding evidently that anæsthetic as providentially designed to make an operation easy rather to the doctor than to the patient.

"I dare say you got through it very well without," said Mrs. Tuck, who would have joked if in extremis. Besides, she was relieved by the doctor's assurance of Dick's perfect security, for the doctor (as she had too good reason to know in the case of her poor dear husband) made the worst—that is, the most of a case. And, indeed, he meant to make something more out of Dick. He promised to call daily, and send purifying blood-mixtures, and he prescribed absolute abstinence from tobacco and stimulants.

Dick did not, of course, take his aunt's serious view of the prescriptions of "the leech," which obsolete title he revived for the doctor as appropriate to his blood-sucking attendance on Mr. Tuck. But, as he did not wish to make her uncomfortable, he compromised the matter by consenting to drink nothing stronger than the mixtures on the condition that he was allowed to smoke. There was something suspicious in the alacrity with which he proposed the compromise, yet it took Mrs. Tuck some days

to discover that the mixtures she had been so gratified to find him drinking even before they were due, and in even undue quantities, were wines and spirits which mimicked the doctor's draughts as closely in colour as the wholesome *Leptalis* butterfly mimics the colour of the poisonous *Ithomia*.

Her suspicions were at last aroused one evening by seeing Dick take two table-spoonfuls instead of one, at an interval of an hour instead of three, of a light brown draught. She took up the bottle, uncorked, and smelled it.

"Brandy!" she exclaimed, aghast.

"My dear aunt, you didn't really think I was drinking Kirk's rot?" in a tone of utter and innocent amazement.

Dick was equanimous in other emergencies besides that of the charge of a mad dog.

"Well, Dick, you know what the consequences may be!"

"If you mean hydrophobia, aunt, I've had it all my life. You know I never could drink clean water, and is it likely I could stand that filth? Ugh!"

There was nothing for it but to allow Dick to drink his liquor, without pouring it at measured intervals, and with measured accuracy, from a medicine-bottle into a table-spoon, and from a table-spoon into a wine-glass—a performance he had gone through many times a day with a wry but resolved face.

Mrs. Tuck even forgave him for having passed on the *bonâ fide* mixtures to her poor dear husband, who drank them in perfect good faith and excellent results, for he never caught hydrophobia. He must have caught it if, as the doctor suggested, fear alone could bring it on. He was wild with fear when he heard of the affair. In his secret heart he thought there ought to have been a law, by which anyone bitten by a mad dog should then and there be slaughtered like an ox in the rinderpest to stamp the plague out. As, however, he could not venture to suggest this to Mrs. Tuck, he insisted to her, first, on Dick's instant expulsion from the house.

Mrs. Tuck, by representing the whole county as certain to be scandalised at this mode of rewarding Dick for his heroic rescue of Ida, brought him to reason. She had, however, to give in to the sole condition on which he would consent to harbour so horrible a peril for another hour in the house.

Dick was to be locked into his room

every night, and not set free in the morning until he had drunk to the last drop a glass of water brought him by Mr. Tuck's own confidential valet. Even then Mr. Tuck was not reassured, for the valet could not in common honesty say that the captain had shown no abhorrence of the draught.

"Did he sob?" Mr. Tuck would ask eagerly.

"No, sir; not sob, sir, exactly; but it was a trouble to him, like."

"Did he choke in trying to drink it?"

"Not, as you might say, choke, sir; he jibbed a bit at it."

"But there was no paroxysm?"

"He swore tremendous, sir, and threw the pillars at me."

"I mean he wasn't convulsed?"

"Law, no, sir! aggrawated rayther."

Here Mr. Tuck turns impatiently from the valet to send Mrs. Tuck for a more rational report.

It was in revenge for this morning dose of water that Dick passed on his medicine to Mr. Tuck, as in much the more danger of rabies of the two.

It will be seen that Dick took this business with incredible placidity. It was not in his nature to be anxious. He was so far from running out effusively to meet misfortune half-way that he would cut it when it met him and forget it when it passed. Besides, he had, as he had good reason to have, perfect faith in his own and the doctor's merciless surgery.

Mrs. Tuck, however, did not share Dick's serene assurance. Still less did Ida. The girl was wretched in the thought that this dreadful death, if it overtook Dick, would lie at her door. For, we need hardly say, Dick did not take the trouble to correct the version of the affair he found current. Why should he?

He hated to do anything unpleasant to himself or unpleasant to others, and to undeceive the household in this matter would, he thought, have been both. It would certainly have made his aunt, Ida, and himself look foolish if, after all the praise and gratitude heaped upon him, he were to tell them coolly that he had had no idea of Ida's danger, or of any danger, when he blundered in between her and the dog.

Therefore Dick contented himself with pooh-poohing the heroism attributed to him with a magnanimity which crowned it, to his aunt's thinking and to Ida's.

"Why, what would you have had me do, aunt?" he would ask, in deprecating Mrs.

Tuck's praises. "Would you have had me stand by with my hands in my pockets to see Miss Luard attacked by my own dog? If Dick had done so, you'd discharge him."

Dick was a page of tender years. This put the thing low enough. But then Mrs. Tuck and Ida felt that, as De Quincey somewhere remarks, there are occasions when it is heroic to do a thing, though it would be dastardly not to do it, and though there is no middle way of escape from "the great refusal."

Therefore, Dick, in making nothing of his heroism, only enhanced it in their eyes.

As for Dick's conscience, it troubled him as little as his digestion, and of that vice-conscience, self-respect, he knew nothing. So he took to himself all this glory and gratitude without compunction—with complacency, rather—for he came at last to regard them, as he regarded everything, as his mere due.

There was but one possible motive which might have made him disclaim the credit he accepted—the stimulus this heroic rescue gave to his aunt's matchmaking; but there was now no such passive resistance on Dick's side to her schemes. On the contrary, there was more even than a passive submission—there was an active adhesion to them on the part of our Adonia.

For Ida seemed now no more far off and high up, only to be won after long siege, and only to be held by harassing and never-remitted vigilance. From seeming cold, proud, unapproachable, she suddenly seemed meek, winning, and to be won without insuperable or insupportable difficulties.

In truth, many feelings combined to transform Ida—remorse, admiration, gratitude. She had, she thought, cruelly misjudged Dick. She had taken him to be a selfish, lazy, pleasure-seeker, who cared only for his own ease, and would not stir foot or finger for anyone else in the world. Yet beneath all this seeming easy, selfish, and indolent pococurantism lay the most unlooked-for kind of heroism, still, strong, unconscious, magnanimous, which did a great thing greatly, and cared not to speak or hear of it again.

You see, Ida was of a romantic age and sex, and had her mind so possessed with high ideals, as to be readily duped by the appearance of their realisation. Your ghost-seer is always a man who believed in ghosts to begin with, whose mind is so

possessed with his superstition that a scarecrow of shreds and patches, waving in the night wind, looks to him of the other awful world. Similarly Ida's mind was so full of heroic ideals, that Dick's apparent heroism imposed on her completely.

All that Mrs. Tuck had suggested in the matchmaking conversation with Ida, recorded in the last chapter, seemed no more incredible to the girl. So much lay unsuspected beneath Dick's light manner, that love itself might have lain there concealed, and concealed for the very reason assigned by Mrs. Tuck—Dick's magnanimous repulsion from the mere appearance of fortune-hunting. For had he not shown himself magnanimous in greater things? And was this not love, which now at last began to disclose itself?

It was—such love as Dick had to offer. He took Ida's intense anxiety about him, her admiration and her gratitude, for the first beginnings of love on her side. It was inexpressibly pleasant to him to be the centre of interest to this superb beauty, of whom but yesterday he stood in awe. It appeared to him, as to the hero of Locksley Hall, that :

Now her cheek was pale and thinner, than should be for one so young,
And her eyes on all my motions with a mute observance hung.

Nor was this Dick's coxcombry. Ida was haunted, harassed, harrowed with an anxiety lest Dick should fall a victim to the horrible death from which he had saved her. Now Dick, as he did not share this anxiety, did not understand it, and therefore naturally took evidences of it for symptoms of a more personal and intrinsic interest in him—an interest made intelligible to him by his aunt's confession that she had given Ida to understand that he was in love with her. Mrs. Tuck had made this move in the game just at the proper moment, when he was beginning both to believe it himself, and to wish that Ida should believe it. Thinking that Dick kept his hands off the prize within his reach out of mere and pure magnanimity, she meant by this confession to burn his boats, break down his bridges, and force him forward in spite of himself.

"It's rather like dunning her for a debt, aunt, isn't it?" he said in reply to one of his aunt's exhortations to be more explicit and pronounced in his attentions.

"She thinks she owes me her life, and she

might think I was asking her hand in payment."

"My dear Dick, she doesn't think you love her because you saved her life, but she knows you saved her life because you loved her. She knew you loved her before this thing happened at all."

"Knew I loved her! But I never——"

"But I did, Dick. There, I may as well make a clean breast of it. When you said you were held back from declaring yourself by some silly notion that it was unfair to her, I thought it time to take the thing into my own hands. So I gave her a broad hint of your feelings."

"You did! What did she say?" eagerly.

"Just what I expected."

"What?"

"Nothing."

"She couldn't have said much less."

"Much more, you mean. She might have said a great deal less. She might have said she was very, very sorry—very much distressed, and so on. What would you expect her to say? 'Thank you, I think I shall change my mind and take him; he's very nice.'"

"It all depends upon how you put it, aunt. If you offered me straight out, like an ice, she might have said, 'Thank you, no; he sets my teeth on edge.' But, if you merely hinted my feelings to her, she might affect to misunderstand you as the least ungracious form of refusal."

"She might easily affect to misunderstand you, if you offered yourself as you say and as you do, Dick, 'like an ice.' But I made what I meant plainer than you are doing, and Ida is quite quick enough to take a hint and to give a hint, too. If she wished to say, 'No, thank you,' indirectly, she'd have said it more plainly than by silence. Silence doesn't stand for 'No,' generally."

"Do you mean it stood for 'Yes'?"

"Indeed I do not, Dick, mean anything of the sort. A thing isn't white because it isn't black. There are plenty of shades between."

"Couleur de rose?"

"I didn't know couleur de rose was a shade between black and white."

"But you know, aunt, with me 'Nothing succeeds like success;' couleur de rose is my winning colour."

"A blush? yes. You need encouragement; you were always diffident, Dick, always."

"Always with her, aunt. Not with other

girls, I admit; but she's not like other girls."

"There's no girl like her, if you mean that, Dick," with much warmth. "It isn't that she's an heiress—I know the value of money, no one knows it better, or has had better reason to know it—but I forget her fortune when I think of her. And you expect her to fling herself at your head!"

"I don't know what you'd have, aunt," grumbled Dick. "Would I have shown her more respect if I treated her like Miss Bates?"

"There's something between, Dick."

"And I've hit it, haven't I? Anyhow I've gone by your advice, aunt. You told me I must be seedy to fetch her, and I'm sure, except that I've not taken Kirk's rot, I've done what I could to be knocked over," looking ruefully at his mangled arm, as though he had arranged this little affair of the mad dog with the view of "fetching" Ida.

This was a trump-card with his aunt, as Dick knew.

"Well, Dick, and you have 'fetched' her, as you call it. She's a good deal more anxious about you than you are about yourself. I don't think you've been ever out of her mind since it happened."

"She thinks she owes her life to me."

"There's that, of course; but I think there's more. And I'm sure there might be more if you were in earnest in the matter."

"Well, aunt, if you'll make the running for me I will do it, if it's to be done by the spur."

And he meant it, too. He was now as much in love with this strange, new, timid, tremulous Ida as he ever had been, or ever could be, with any one. And of this he gave, that very evening, an incredible proof.

"The doctor has been asking again to-day after you, Richard. I didn't tell him about the medicine, but I did about the stimulants. He looked very serious over it. He said you might at least restrict yourself to claret. I wish you would for a week or two. Ida, you ask him."

"I?" stammered Ida, taken completely aback.

"Well, my dear, he'll do it for you, and you are almost as much interested as he. If anything were to happen you'd think it your doing, I know."

This horrible "if anything were to happen," inspired Ida's anxious face and eager tone.

"I wish you would, Captain Brabazon"

Dick promptly put down the decanter, and pushed aside the half-filled glass.

"Then I shall, of course."

And he did, at least while under their anxious eyes.

REMINISCENCES OF JAMAICA.*

IN THREE PARTS. PART I.

THE entrance from seaward into the harbour of Port Royal, is protected by cays or coral reefs, apparently not long risen above the surface, as little soil has collected upon them, and one is nearly awash. They bear curious old-world names, taken from the ancient navigators' charts, and suggesting wild orgies indulged in under the brazen sun while conducting the survey of the harbour. Drunken-men's Cay, Rum Cay, Gun Cay, are all of small dimensions, clothed with green nearly to the water's edge.

It is a lovely sight on nearing these cays to watch the water gradually shoal. Little by little the limpid depths grow clearer and greener, till a fairy forest of living, breathing coral appears as if but an inch or two below the surface; you cannot believe that six feet of water rolls over it. Sea-urchins, sea-anemones, star-fish, and other fleshy zoophytes enjoy themselves in their own flabby way among the corals, expanding and collapsing with the gently heaving water, but retiring within themselves and lying flat at the bottom, shapeless jellies, at the slightest hint of capture. Nothing more lovely can be conceived than the corals as seen from a boat. Large flat masses of the shape of a toadstool; great white branches like a deer's antlers, tipped with blue, red, and violet; rear themselves towards the surface in fragile loveliness, while mounds of brain-stone look as smooth and round as if fresh from a mason's hands. Delicate filmy seaweed of every tint forms a soft carpet, showing off by contrast the brilliant whiteness of the coral, but disappointing when brought to the surface—a collapsed mass of pulp. Night falls here so suddenly, without any intervening twilight, as to leave little enough time for getting home while a glimmer remains sufficient to steer clear of the coral-reefs just awash. It is particularly disagreeable to hear, when hurrying homewards belated, crunch, crash, crunch, as a sharp spike of coral penetrates

* ALL THE YEAR ROUND, New Series, Vol. 32, p. 389, "Port Royal."

the thin sides of the boat, and you are left lamenting, up to the knees in water, and despair at your heart, till perchance somebody sees you from the ships, and comes to the rescue.

One of our pleasantest amusements, albeit rather a toilsome one, was a picnic to Rock Spring, the source of the water-supply, ten miles away, at the head of Kingston Harbour. Having succeeded at great personal labour in collecting all who consented to be dragged from their beds at four-thirty a.m., a start was made in the gun-boat Heron, steam-tender to the commodore's flag-ship, about five. Arriving at about seven, and landing on the piles, you walk at first in single file beside the aqueduct and pipes that convey the water to the holds of the tank-vessels. The reservoir is hewn out of solid grey-green rock on the side of Long Mountain; it is capable of containing over two hundred tons of water, and though six feet deep, is of such a lovely transparency, that it is difficult to believe you are not looking into an empty space with a clean rocky bottom. The water oozes through a fissure in the green stone; it is not known where the spring exactly rises, but the water is absolutely clean, pure, wholesome, and free from the shadow of impurity—I say this, because in yellow-fever epidemics the water-supply is the first thing to be suspected. Beneath, lies a tranquil vale far from pollution or human habitation. At a respectful distance (lest a single leaf should fall and taint the carefully-guarded water) bananas wave and fruit, while the course of a small stream is marked by an impervious forest of strong *Osmunda regalis*, measuring from twelve to seventeen feet in height, thickly carpeted with peppermint and water-cress.

The scene of our picnic was usually laid higher up the mountain, between the great buttress-like roots of a particularly large cotton-tree. Breakfast being ready, also several additional guests from Kingston, Up Park, and the Gardens, tea, coffee, and especially iced claret-cup by the gallon, disappeared as soon as made; and black crabs, deliciously cooked in their shells; cold calipiver (the salmon of Jamaica), taken in the mountain lakes; chickens fed by ourselves upon the white meat of the cocoanut; excellent eggs; scones; oranges; neesberries, a rough brown fruit, second to none when eaten at the exact moment of perfection; "Matrimony," a delicious compound composed of star-apples,

oranges, ice, and sugar, form a repast not to be despised. Cigars and idleness followed, after which the light-hearted middies amused themselves by making the young King of Mosquito wash up the tumblers and glasses.

"William Henry Clarence," so named in honour of our sailor king, William the Fourth, who was a great patron of his father and uncle, succeeded at a very early age to the almost barren honours of the Kingdom of Mosquito on the death of his uncle, a courteous sable gentleman, whose end was unlimited conviviality.

This poor young lad of eighteen died—it is believed by poison—about a year after returning to Blewfields, Honduras, his seat of government, which might have become an enlightened and habitable place had his life been spared to exercise any authority. He was of a singularly amiable disposition, talented and well-meaning, with fine Indian features and straight, black hair. Much care had been bestowed upon his education by the Baptists to whom he had been confided, but he had the instincts of a soldier, and told me in confidence how he longed to be sent to a military college, but the funds available for his education out of the Mosquito "civil list" did not allow of any wild extravagance. On such festive occasions as a grand luncheon at the Admiralty House the young king was attired in a blue military frock-coat and cap, with gold buttons and red facings, rendered regal by a broad light-blue watered-ribbon, worn across his chest, like the Order of the Bath, in which he took immense pride.

Fleeing before the first hot rays of the advancing sun, we usually got home by half-past ten, just as the sea-breeze set in, bathed, and rested for the day.

Opposite Port Royal, and guarding the entrance to Kingston Harbour, are two once important forts, Apostles' Battery and Fort Augusta. To seaward of the former is Green Bay, a place celebrated in olden days for duels. Nothing now rewards a visit here, but the grave of a Frenchman, Lewis Baldy, of whom it is recounted on his tombstone that in the great earthquake of 1692 he was swallowed up at Port Royal and disgorged again into the sea, but survived this extraordinary experience for many years.

Beyond Green Bay again, on the most hopelessly sterile spot in Jamaica, herd together under Government supervision the lepers of the island. Shunned by all

mankind, bereft of everything that makes life endurable, they yet live on without hope or joy, often till extreme old age. When you have said they have enough food, you have said all. These poor souls are beyond the reach of everything but death, and even that last enemy is in no hurry to claim them.

At Fort Augusta, besides the powder-magazine, there is still standing a great range of barracks, tenanted only by flocks of pigeons and by bats and owls. The graveyard attached to the fort is full of tablets to the memory of a vast army who were allowed to perish of yellow-fever in this pestilential place. In these days of sanitary precautions, it seems astonishing that Englishmen should have been brought out here, planted ashore at Fort Augusta—a place surrounded by marshes and black, stagnant, reedy estuaries, now the home of alligators and screech-owls—and have been allowed, about seventy to one hundred years ago, to have died like rotten sheep. Half hidden among giant cacti, mangrove, and cashew, a scrub, impenetrable, and not even picturesque, are to be found hundreds of tons of old thirty-two pounders, which, apparently to save trouble and get them out of the way when the two or three big guns replaced them, were pitched from the ramparts into the thicket, where they lie half-buried in marshy débris. Various projects for shipping some of this valuable old iron are always being formed, with, as far as I know, no immediate result.

Apostles' Battery is perched on a slight rocky prominence, and is far healthier than Fort Augusta. The ruinous buildings are still made use of occasionally for a quarantine hospital. Port Henderson, close by, possesses a celebrated well and bath, blasted out of the rock and arched over with greenish-grey stone. Looking down into it you are quite unable to determine its depth, or, indeed, whether it contains any water at all, it is so absolutely clear and transparent. Once a poor young midshipman, fancying the bath must be very deep, took a header into it; striking violently against the bottom, his neck was dislocated, and he died in a few hours.

Food is a difficulty at Port Royal—eatables are only to be obtained from the market at Kingston, five miles off. Beef alone is cheaper than in England, mutton dearer and nastier; goat is very frequently substituted for mutton, though, when taxed with the fraud, the butcher disclaims the insinuation with scorn. Fowls are remark-

ably thin and tough, and I often gave a shilling for four eggs. Turtle is cheap—sixpence a pound for fine fat alderman's turtle; but notwithstanding its cheapness, an accomplished cook prefers to have plenty of beef stock and calves' feet, wherewith to make the soup both strong and gelatinous, before any turtle at all is put into it—in fact, the turtle is the least ingredient in good turtle-soup! Black crabs are easily obtainable; we, however, always had grave doubts as to the nature of the last food upon which they had gorged themselves, and so they were educated in barrels for three weeks upon barley-meal. The crabs are then boiled, minced, seasoned, and served up in their shells. One of our party was awoken in the middle of the night by a most curious sound, as of some creature being dragged along the corridor, occasionally tapping a sharp little heel. Daylight revealed a large black crab which had escaped from the barrel, mounted a long flight of steps, and had finally taken refuge upon the mosquito net of the bed, where it clung desperately by one claw. Game there is none; a few little sandpipers were sometimes shot on the palisades between the lights, and were not bad. Fish are coarse and tasteless, so that gourmands have a bad time of it in Jamaica.

Servants are a grave difficulty; the climate is too trying for English people, whereas our Barbadian or Jamaican cook and cook's mate really enjoyed themselves in an atmosphere resembling the tropical orchid-house at Kew Gardens. One was horrible dirty, the next inordinately fat, the last, a Barbadian, clean, and a very tolerable cook, though wasteful and extravagant, and his turtle-soup was excellent enough to cover a multitude of sins.

I often heard that the native servants were revengeful; on one occasion only did we find them so. A young black girl in our employ, who had come to us highly recommended, was convicted of flagrant misconduct; she was accordingly warned to pack up her things, and be ready to go to Kingston by the steam-launch in the morning. During the afternoon the iced water in a cooler, always standing in the dining-room, was observed to present a cloudy, whitish appearance; so much so, that it was thrown away untasted. Next morning when our early coffee was poured out, a broad yellow stain still remained on the side of the cup. I sent for the cook and pointed it out to him; he seemed to

know perfectly well what was the matter with it, and quickly carried it away, hurriedly saying: "I bring missus fresh coffee." Before I had the least realised that an attempt had been made to poison us, the coffee was poured away. I afterwards found out that, after being dismissed, the girl hovered about the kitchen all the afternoon, quite an unusual thing, and was the first up in the morning, still loitering about the kitchen door. The same girl afterwards accosted us in the market at Kingston with the greatest cheerfulness, as if nothing whatever had happened to prevent a cordial greeting on our part. I frequently heard of cases where native poisons were carried about by native servants—and trusted servants—for years, "in case" they might be suddenly wanted to "pay out" some unlucky employer or fellow-servant who had offended them. Obeah poisoning is also extensively carried out in remote nooks, particularly in the mountains, where incantations resembling those of ancient witchcraft, are practised with the aid of a white cock. We never could keep a white bird in the hills; they were always stolen for Obeah purposes.

The former wife of a friend of my own, wasted, pined, and died under a constant course of some irritant poison, administered (it was afterwards discovered) by her trusted housekeeper, in the expectation that the reins of government would pass into her own hands with the appurtenances thereof. However, when the poor lady died, so much grave suspicion attached to this woman, who had carried out her cruel task with fiendish malice, that she disappeared no one knew whither.

That there is a diabolical element lurking in the apparently good-tempered and easy-going Jamaican, was amply shown in the atrocities committed at Morant Bay during the rebellion of 1865, on their previously adored masters and mistresses.

All black people love fine clothes. On one of the rare occasions on which I appeared in a ball-dress at Port Royal, my English maid thoughtfully proposed that the poor old black scullerywoman in the kitchen should come up and see me. "Come in," I said, hearing a succession of loud sniffs outside. No sooner was the door open and I stood revealed to sight, than she fell upon me with outstretched arms, clasping my knees in the wildest excitement and admiration. I could well

have dispensed with that portion of it, her apron and person in general being far from immaculate. She was an excellent creature, albeit dirty, and when she died, wishing to mark our sense of honest and faithful service, her poor little shrivelled black body, enclosed in a neat coffin, was borne by six stalwart seamen to the stern-sheets of the Commodore's galley, followed by her nearest relations and friends in the whaler. The two boats were then slowly rowed past the flag-ship and other men-of-war, who flew their flags half-mast for the occasion, to the landing-place on the palisades, where the clergyman, and a numerous assemblage of Port Royal, were awaiting them. Our only regret was that she could not have attended her own funeral, she would have been so flattered and charmed at the attention paid to her.

A funeral is heartily enjoyed by the natives, none of whom would willingly absent themselves from one, and they will tramp any distance in the blazing sun to attend a wake. As soon as the breath is out of a body, it is treated with a fear and respect which are far from being accorded to it during life. As many relations as can be collected together in the very limited time, pack into the death-chamber, where they pass the whole of the succeeding night, singing without one moment's intermission, till there are signs of the dawn. Their voices then ascend higher and higher, till an excruciatingly high key is attained, when with a burst of shrill and prolonged notes, the struggling spirit is thought to be at rest, safe from the violence of the powers of darkness, who are always in waiting the first night to seize and bear away the dead. The ninth night after death is also an important one. Another ceaseless period of singing, another great gathering, and the spirit is for ever at peace. It must be highly undesirable to possess a large circle of relations, as these nights of wild excitement are most exhausting, and during epidemics of cholera, small-pox, and measles, were the means, till put an end to by Government, of largely spreading contagion. Even after the most stringent prohibitions, wakes were continually held in secret on the hillsides, the few police being quite powerless to prevent them—even if they tried, which I doubt, as the force consists of black or coloured men, sympathising with their race in these fetish customs. For one

native buried in the cemeteries, certainly five are put into a hole in their own garden, causing the particular spot to be shunned after nightfall with abject fear, as long as the place of sepulchre is remembered.

The negroes are not frequent eaters, but when they do eat—a favourite time is about nine at night—the quantity consumed is beyond belief. After these Gargantuan meals they lie down, and sleep the sleep of the gorged. Very little change is either made or desired in their diet from day to day; a pudding composed of yam, salt-fish, calavances, aché, and fat, forming the staple of their food all the year round.

These people think we are quite absurd in the frequency of our meals, and I don't know that they are wrong. A man-servant of ours was heard to soliloquise, with a sigh enough to blow a candle out, "Dem white people never done eat," as he prepared to lay the cloth for the fourth time that day.

Their naïve revelations are sometimes very amusing. Here is a typical case. Illness and various hindrances had prevented our returning a first visit quite as quickly as etiquette demanded. Some little time afterwards we proceeded to enquire if Mrs. — was at home? "No," shortly replied an offended-looking black lady, opening about two inches of the door, "she has waited 'pon you for tree day, and now she has gone out." Our visit had evidently been expected sooner, and its non-payment freely commented upon.

Bidden to stay with the Governor we crossed to Port Henderson in the galley. The Governor's carriage in waiting at that desolate landing-place made quite a gorgeous spot of colour, the ridiculously pompous ebony faces of his servants looking comically out of their smart scarlet liveries. An ugly drive of twelve miles over sandy tracts bordered with cashew and straight scrubby cactus, brought us to Spanish Town, once the flourishing capital of the island, when Kingston consisted of a few mud huts upon the shore. Little by little its grandeur has departed. King's House (a fine relic of the old Spanish times, with vast banqueting and ball rooms, arched with black chestnut), public offices, archives, museum, have all been removed to Kingston and elsewhere, leaving the once handsome square, crowded with fine habitable buildings, desolate.

One great attraction Spanish Town must always possess for travellers in the lovely Bogue Walk close by, a natural ravine winding with the Cobré river at the bottom of a deep gorge. A mountain rises up sheer on each side, clothed and bathed in a tangle of tropical verdure, with just space enough at the bottom for the rushing river, its bed strewn with grey rocks, and the drive beside it. After passing the Bogue Walk the mountains recede, the turbulent river, no longer pent up, runs quietly, and the verdant plains of Linstead open to view; here we "baited" and melted, before commencing the ascent of Mount Diavolo, two thousand feet high. The view from the summit is glorious: miles and miles of yellow cane and blue-green tobacco, with the river twisting and turning in and out. Dwarf stone parapets were our sole protection against a fall into the valley, a thousand feet below. Midway in the descent the horses swerved as if not under command, there was a lurch, and then a nod on the part of the driver. The horses were now tearing down the steep decline; another swerve, and the off-wheel, striking against the stone parapet, had half its tire torn violently off. The coachman was asleep! Fearing that the flapping tire would alarm the already excited horses, we got out and walked, while the horses were led into Moneague, where a tinker of a wheelwright "dished" the wheel the wrong way in putting on a new tire, causing it to wobble about in an eccentric manner all the rest of the journey. Moneague is a very old town, with the remains of many fine Spanish buildings, blighted and decayed, and fast mingling with the dust. Sundown brought us to our journey's end; here a fine park-like domain of great beauty and extent, rolled away from the comfortable well-kept house. A thousand head of cattle spread over the plains, and dotted the hillside. Clumps of wide-spreading trees made delicious shade for countless animals all the hot noonday, but in dry seasons they suffered much from want of water, often being driven fifteen or twenty miles for a drink. "Ticks," originally imported from Cuba, infest the cattle, and make it a dangerous experiment for man as well as beast to roam about these beautiful grasslands. Here the large landowner seems more akin to the Jamaica planter of old, keeping troops of black servants, and exercising unbounded hospitality. The return from St. Ann's was com-

menced at four-thirty a.m., it being still pitch-dark. As morning dawned a thick white mist lay upon the valley like a vast lake, hiding everything below from sight; we seemed to be driving into the air, leaving the clouds beneath us. On the very summit of Mount Diavolo a halt was made to see the sun rise. First it touched the horizon, then blazed forth, piercing the heavy mists, which lifted, rose, and sailed away into the skies at the first touch of its hot rays. The Bogue Walk seen later in the day assumes an altogether different aspect when lighted up from the opposite side. Rio Cobré has so many waterfalls down which to tumble, so much broken rock to hurry over, that it is often very dangerous, especially during sudden freshets, caused by an afternoon shower in the hills. Early in the day the river is generally running quietly. Groups of gay-hearted chattering women then collect in the stillest pools; each with her dress kilted up, standing knee-deep in front of her favourite flat stone. Here she will talk incessantly while lazily washing out the family rags, which are ruthlessly banged against the stones instead of being rubbed and wrung. One woman remains longer than the rest, perhaps, unobservant of any change, till a sudden flood lifts her off her feet, flings her head against a jagged rock, and nothing more is ever seen of her; nor do they ever seem to gain experience, for no week passes without some such accident happening in one or other of the many streams in the island.

A SECRET.

I TOLD my secret to the sweet wild roses,
Heavy with dew, new-waking in the morn,
And they had breathed it to a thousand others,
Before another day was slowly born.
"Oh, fickle roses!" said I, "you shall perish!"
So plucked them for my lady sweet to wear,
In the pure silence of her maiden bosom,
The curled luxuriance of her chestnut hair.

I told the secret to a bird new building
Her nest at peace within the spreading tree;
And e'er her children had begun to chatter
She told it o'er and o'er right joyously.
"Oh, traitor bird!" I whispered, "stay thy singing,
Thou dost not know, there in thy nest above,
That secrets are not made to tell to others,
That silence is the birthright of true love!"

I told the secret to my love, my lady,
She held it closely to her darling breast!
Then as I clasped her, came a tiny whisper:
"The birds and flowers told me all the rest,
Nor should'st thou chide them that they spake the secret—
The whole world is a chord of love divine,
And birds and flowers but fulfil their mission,
In telling secrets, sweet as mine and thine!"

"CHINESE GORDON." *

IN TWO PARTS. PART II.

IN reading once again the story of the Ever Victorious Army, we have been struck with the singular military capacity of its hero and its captain. It seems to us, moreover, that in a general way, but particularly in the recent voluminous remarks in the newspapers, to that capacity justice has not been done. People give to Gordon the credit of being a great administrator, a novel diplomatist, and the fortunate possessor of a strange and wondrous influence over the hearts of men; but his ability and achievements as a leader of armies and a master of campaigns seem to have been considerably, if not entirely, overlooked. Gordon the Christian governor, and Gordon the kindly helper of the poor, are realised in the popular mind, and loved; Gordon, the consummate strategist, is barely understood. And yet, as it seems to us, the military resource and audacity, the originality and keen perfectitude of plan, and the almost magic insight into an enemy's intention, which are visible throughout his career—in the Crimea, in China, in the Soudan—are points of character not less important nor less admirable than the qualities which have received a wider recognition because they appeal more directly to sentiment and imagination.

Rectitude, courage, simple trust in God—these qualities are great, and enable men to do great things; but in Gordon there is something more. He has the genius of a great general, a rapidity of thought and energy of action which, if not entirely singular, perhaps, in themselves, become so in virtue of his peculiar personality, the daring of his invention, and often the humour of his methods. For Gordon, with all his earnestness and mysticism, with all his unsparing thoroughness in every department of action assigned to him by others or selected by himself, is a humourist.

At the close of the Taiping Rebellion, Gordon returned to England with the one idea of enjoying well-earned quiet in the circle of his family. But "no sooner," writes Mr. Hake, "had he set foot in this country than invitations came in upon him from all quarters, and to have him for a guest was the season's ideal; friends

* "The Story of Chinese Gordon," by A. Egmont Hake. With two portraits and two maps. London: Remington and Co., 1884.

and kinsmen were made the bearers of superb invitations, all of which he had the courage to decline." When he found himself pronounced a hero he ceased to listen, and even begged a fellow-officer who had written an account of the campaign to let the subject drop. "To push and intrigue was impossible;" and, at a moment when most men would have accepted with proud pleasure the courtesies of society and the praises of the great, he was content to resume his duty as a Royal Engineer. A striking instance of this exceptional modesty (or is it an exceptional and admirable vanity?) is related in connection with his Journal of the Taiping War. This valuable document was illustrated by himself, and he had sent it home from China on the understanding that it should be seen by none but his family. But one of Her Majesty's Ministers heard of the manuscript, borrowed it, and was so impressed that he had it printed for the benefit of his colleagues. Late one evening Gordon enquired about his journal, and being told what had happened, rose from table and sped in hot haste to the Minister's house. The Minister was not at home; Gordon hurried to the printers, demanded his MS., and ordered the printed copies to be destroyed and the type broken up. No one has seen the manuscript since, and Mr. Hake declares there is every probability of its having been destroyed.

In 1865, Gordon was appointed Commanding Engineer at Gravesend, and there for six years he remained, fulfilling his official duties in the construction of the Thames defences and devoting himself, in a manner almost unexampled, to the poor. "His house was school, hospital, and almshouse in turn," and his delight in children, and especially in boys working on the river or the sea, is one of the sunniest traits in his character. Many he rescued from the gutter, cleansed and clothed, and fed, and kept them in his home for weeks until work and place were found for them. He called them his "kings," and marked their voyages with innumerable pins stuck in a map of the world that hung over his mantelpiece, and these pins he "moved from point to point as his youngsters advanced," and day by day prayed for them as they went. The lads loved him, and scribbled on the fences a touching legend of their own invention: "God bless the Kernel!"

Pleasant indeed it would be to linger over this chapter in the life of this wonder-

ful man; but biography is long, and our pages are short. Let us pass at once to what, in our opinion, is by far the most romantic period in Gordon's career—the years that he spent in the Soudan, the land of the dry desert, and mighty rivers, and fiery sun; the remote unfriended country of the hunters of men and their victims, the suffering and human blacks.

Early in 1874 Gordon succeeded Sir Samuel Baker as Governor of the Tribes in Upper Egypt. The Khedive—Ismail—proposed to give him ten thousand pounds a year. He would not hear of it; he accepted two thousand pounds. This act was much discussed at the time, and the right interpretation was not always forthcoming. But it was entirely consistent with Gordon's conduct in similar affairs in China and elsewhere. At the conclusion of the campaign against the Taipings, the Chinese Government presented the Captain of the Ever Victorious Army with a large fortune. He not only rejected it with contempt, but actually thrashed from his tent the messengers who brought it!

Egypt had made vast strides into the heart of Africa since 1853, and as its empire spread, so grew the slave-trade, and so, under the unscrupulous and terrible rule of the Pashas, deepened the misery of the people. The Arab captains, "the hunters of men," attained great political power, and their abominable traffic was the dominant interest of everybody in the land, from the little children of the blacks, who wanted freedom, to the Governor-General of the Soudan himself, who wanted coin. So strong, indeed, did the slavers at last become that the government got at once ashamed and afraid. The mightiest and cleverest of them was one Sebehr Rahama, who, by the way, has lately come to the front again in a very remarkable and entirely Anglo-Egyptian fashion. This superiorman-hunter was called the Black Pasha, and commanded thirty stations. Conscious of his power, he set up as the rival and equal of the Khedive himself, with a court of Arab ruffians and burlesque of princely state. The Khedive was considerably moved by the preposterous behaviour of this upstart, and determined forthwith to humble him to the dust. An attempt to effect this object failed miserably; and the Khedive was weak enough, in his dilemma of fear and doubt, to make Sebehr a Bey, and to accept his services in the invasion of Darfur. Darfur

being conquered, Sebehr was rewarded with the rank of Pasha. But, like Hung of China, he cherished vast ambitions. He would be content with nothing less than the Governor-Generalship of the Soudan. This pretension brought matters to a crisis. Hitherto, Ismail had encouraged slave-dealing, for it increased his revenue; but, the moment his personal supremacy was threatened by the man whose power he, by his own cupidity, had helped to make, he was converted into what Mr. Hake happily terms "active and sonorous philanthropy." Of a sudden he began to regard the slave-trade with "holy horror," and determined to suppress it—at least, so he said. For this purpose he engaged Sir Samuel C. Baker; to this end he enlisted the genius of Gordon.

Gordon had not been at Cairo many days before he wrote: "I think I can see the true motive of the expedition, and believe it to be a straw to catch the attention of the English people." Nevertheless, he determined to go through with his undertaking; for he saw that he could help the suffering tribes. In his own words may be read the spirit in which he began and carried on his perilous task: "I will do it, for I value my life as naught, and should only leave much weariness for perfect peace."

Gordon wished to proceed by ordinary steamer to Souakim, but Nubar Pasha (the able minister who is once again in office, and who, Mr. Hake says, in many ways tried Gordon's patience) insisted upon his going in state. The special train was engaged, therefore; but the engine collapsed. Thus, in huge delight, Gordon wrote: "They had begun in glory, and ended in shame."

His first decree is as follows, and in the light of his new mission to the land of his old labours, it will be read with interest, particularly when it is considered that the circumstances differ in nothing but unessentials:

"By reason of the authority of the Governor of the Provinces of the Equatorial Lakes, with which His Highness the Khedive has invested me, and the irregularities which until now have been committed, it is henceforth decreed:

"1. That the traffic in ivory is the monopoly of the Government.

"2. No person may enter these provinces without a 'teskere' from the Governor-General of Soudan, such 'teskere' being available only after it shall have received

the visa of the competent authority at Gondokoro, or elsewhere.

"3. No person may recruit or organise armed bands within these provinces.

"4. The importation of firearms and gunpowder is prohibited.

"5. Whosoever shall disobey this decree will be punished with all the rigour of the military laws.

GORDON."

This proclaimed, he sailed for Gondokoro—a strange river voyage, amidst crocodiles that slumbered on the mud, and ponderous river-horses that splashed and blew in the stream, whilst little mobs of monkeys came down from the gum-trees to the margin to drink, and wild birds sailed in flocks overhead. One night, Gordon, thinking of home in the moonlight, was startled by loud laughing in a bush on the river's bank. "I felt put out, but the irony came from birds, that laughed at us for some time in a very rude way. They were a species of stork, and seemed in capital spirits, and highly amused at anybody thinking of going up to Gondokoro with the hope of doing anything."

By a rare coincidence of favourable circumstances—such as rarely gladden the traveller in any land, least of all in what is called Upper Egypt—and hastened by Gordon's invincible energy, the little band—consisting of Gordon, his staff, and escort—reached Khartoum in an incredibly short space of time. From that flat-roofed, mud-built city Gordon started, after a busy stay of eight days, for Gondokoro. The journey was accomplished by steamer, and was not without romantic incident. Once when cutting wood for the steamer's fires, they surprised some Dinkas—a people who are black, and pastoral, and worshippers of wizards. The chief, in full dress (a necklace), was induced to come on board. He came and softly licked the back of Gordon's hand, and held his face to his own, and "made as if he were spitting." At dinner he devoured his neighbour's portion as well as his own, after which he and his liege-men sang a hymn of thanksgiving, and proceeded to crawl to Gordon, that they might kiss his feet. That was denied them, but they were sent away rejoicing, under a splendid burden of beads.

At the junction of the Bahr-Gazelle with the Gondokoro River they found swarms of natives who had rubbed themselves with wood-ash until their complexions were "the colour of slate-pencil." These people were half-starved and in great suffering. "What," writes

Gordon, "what a mystery, is it not, why they are created? A life of fear and misery night and day! One does not wonder at their not fearing death. No one can conceive the utter misery of these lands. Heat and mosquitos day and night all the year round. But I like the work, for I believe I can do a great deal to ameliorate the lot of the people." At Bohr, a slavers' stronghold, the people were "anything but civil: they had heard of the Khartoum decree;" but at St. Croix, a mission-station, the steamer passed to the joyous sounds of dance and song.

Gondokoro was reached in twenty-four days, and once there, Gordon was at his seat of government, and in the very heart of his perilous task. So swift had been his journey that the townsmen had not heard even of his nomination. His advent amazed them. Gondokoro was a trysting-place for wretchedness and danger; the state of the people was "as bad as it well could be," and so terribly had they been treated that, half a mile from its walls, the Governor-General himself would have gone in peril of his life. But Gordon's spirit did not fail. He was confident that he could relieve the people of their sufferings, that he could build a better state of life for them if—there always is an "if"—if he could but win their confidence. To achieve that necessary consummation he passed hither and thither through the land, there giving grain, here employing the natives to plant their patches with maize. Why employ them to do that which is their normal occupation? Because before he came they had ceased to sow since they could never reap the fruits of their toil; they were systematically robbed of their little harvest. And so when the strange fame of this kingly white man spread amongst them, in their simple hearts they thought he could do all things, and flocked about him in great numbers, and begged that he would buy their children, whom they were too poor to feed themselves. Clearly their confidence was being surely won; and if one thing in this world is certain it is that, in those bare and burning lands, the name of Gordon is remembered to this day with gratitude.

This grand result was reached in great part by his uncompromising attitude towards the slavers. The slavers are, perhaps, as unequivocal a race of blackguards as ever existed; and they were in collusion with the Government. "They stole the cattle

and kidnapped their owners, and they shared the double booty with officials of a liberal turn of mind."

Here is a record of one exploit, typical of many, and showing how Gordon dealt with this state of things. By the timely interception of some letters, he discovered that two thousand stolen cows and a troop of kidnapped negroes were on their way from a gang of man-hunters to that estimable personage, the governor of Fashoda. The cavalcade was promptly stopped. The cows, since it was impossible to return them to their owners, were confiscated; the slaves he either sent home or bought himself, and they came about him, trying to touch his hand, or even the hem of his garment. In China, Gordon had conquered rebels to enlist them on his own side; and much the same happened here. The chief slavers he cast into prison, but after a while those who proved themselves possessed of useful qualities he released and employed. Equally with the great essential duties of his position, the most trivial matters received unremitting attention. He was never idle, even amusing himself in odd moments of leisure by "inventing traps for the huge rats that shared his cabin." And he writes of a poor, sick old woman whom he nursed and fed for weeks, but all in vain: "She had her tobacco up to the last. What a change from her misery! I suppose she filled her place in life as well as Queen Elizabeth."

His work grew more dangerous and difficult. His native staff was useless from intrigue and treachery, and his Europeans to a man were down with ague and fever. Yet notwithstanding traitors in the camp, and enemies without, Gordon toiled on at his post, and, though worn to a shadow, was at once Governor of the Provinces and nurse to his staff. His difficulties were increased by the real or feigned ineptitude of his subordinates. When the commandant he had left at Gondokoro was ordered to send up a mountain howitzer, he forwarded empty ammunition-tubes instead of full. Thus Gordon was left defenceless with ten men, in a place where no Arab would have stayed without a hundred. And yet we find him always cheerful, and devoted to the people—teaching them, with novel methods, the use of money; whilst he delighted his ragamuffin soldiery with the wonders of a magic-lantern, and by firing a gun a hundred and fifty yards off with a magnetic exploder! In truth,

with Gordon, to be single-handed is to work marvels; and during this period he laboured with astonishing energy and success. He converted Khartoum into a Botany Bay for do-nothing governors, the blackguard slavers whom he caught and punished, and the traitors of his own staff. To punish rebellious chiefs, he resorted, not to fire and sword, but to the razzia, or cattle-raid, a method much more humorous, and infinitely more final in its results.

Not, however, that he had no fighting. The wizard-worshippers gave him much trouble, and many of the tribes would not be content until they had felt the might of his arm. Brisk battles were frequent, and in one of them the bulk of the force with him at the time was completely "eaten up," as our friends the Zulus pleasantly describe the process of annihilation. This engagement is in some ways typical of them all, and it is instructive. In travelling through a turbulent region of his kingdom, Gordon observed that the temper of the tribes was, to say the least, forbidding. Wizards gathered on the hills, and cursed their enemy—as they supposed Gordon to be—and waved him off the face of the earth; spies hung about the camp and in the long grass; altogether there was general warning of a storm. Gordon was joined about this time by his good lieutenant Linant and his party, who came in from an outlying station. Gordon wished to find a steamer, which lay somewhere in the river, and for this purpose passed thirty men over to the east bank. The instant they landed, down came the natives; Gordon followed at once. The natives retorted by making a rush at his men. They were repulsed, and Gordon attempted to parley. They refused, and, knowing him for the chief, tried to surround him; he let them come near, and then drove them back with bullets. Linant proposed that he should burn their houses, and Gordon, fearing further mischief unless he effectually retaliated, agreed. One morning, therefore, he sent off a party of forty-one men. At mid-day he heard firing, and saw Linant in a red shirt he had given him, on a hill; the red shirt, and the party led by its wearer, were visible for a couple of hours, when they disappeared. Later on thirty or forty blacks were seen running down to the river, and Gordon, concluding they had gone to his steamer, fired on them as they ran. Ten minutes afterwards, one of his own detachment appeared on the opposite

bank; he had been disarmed, and declared that all the others of the party were killed. The red shirt had maddened the natives; the party got scattered; spears did the rest. Gordon was left with only thirty men, and he decided to make a strategic movement to the rear. Wonderful to relate, the tribesmen did not molest him—with the exception of a certain wizard who elected to survey the retreat from the top of a rock, whence he "grinned and jeered, and vaticinated," as Gordon was giving orders. The Governor took his rifle. "I don't think that's a healthy spot from which to deliver an address," he said, and the wizard prophesied no more.

After a brief holiday in London, Gordon returned to Egypt early in 1877. He was appointed Governor-General of the Soudan, with Darfur and the provinces of the Equator—a district one thousand six hundred and forty miles long, and nearly seven hundred wide. Furthermore, he was deputed to look into Abyssinian affairs, and to negotiate with King John for a settlement of pending disputes. Into events Abyssinian, however, the space at our disposal does not permit us to enter. Suffice it to say that they were every whit as full of romance and significance as anything else in Gordon's wonderful career.

His installation in the new position, so much more important and difficult than any he had yet held, took place at Khartoum on the 5th of May. The firman of the Khedive and an address were read by the Cadi, and a royal salute was fired. Gordon was expected to make a speech. He said: "With the help of God I will hold the balance level." This brief and trenchant sentence delighted the people more, says Mr. Hake, than if he had talked for an hour. Afterwards, he ordered gratuities to be given to the deserving poor; in three days he had distributed upwards of one thousand pounds of his own money. The formalities of his new state disgusted him; he was "guarded like an ingot of gold," and was given, it seems, in the midst of solemn ceremonies, to making irrelevant humorous remarks to the great chiefs—in English, which they did not understand.

Many things had happened in the Soudan since 1874. When he took up the reins of government in 1877, he found the country, as Mr. Hake says, "quick with war." The provincial governors were worthless, and often mutinous; the slavers were out in revolt; the six thousand Bashi-Bazouks

who were used as frontier-guards robbed on their own account, and winked at the doings of the slavers; savage and reckless tribes had to be subdued. "It was a stupendous task, to give peace to a country quick with war; to suppress slavery among a people to whom trade in human flesh was life, and honour, and fortune; to make an army out of perhaps the worst material ever seen; to grow a flourishing trade and a fair revenue in the wildest anarchy in the world."

One of the most difficult and desperate of the tasks before Gordon, was the subjugation of the vast province of the Bahr-Gazelle. This, itself a little continent, had been lashed to anarchy and wretchedness by Sebehr, the Black Pasha, already mentioned. It was necessary that he and his son Suleiman, with their army of man-hunters, should be subdued, and the land brought to rule and order. But, before that could be achieved, it was of the utmost urgency that Gordon should go to Darfur, where revolt was rampant, and the Khedive's garrisons were besieged in their barracks by the rebels. Here that splendid confidence in himself, which is one of his strongest characteristics, helped him in an extraordinary degree. His army was a useless mob of ragamuffins—"nondescripts," he called them; the tribes and the slavers he had to subdue were warlike and fierce; his nondescripts could be trusted only to run away from danger, or to plot the murder of himself. Most men would not have undertaken such work under such severely trying conditions; but Gordon never faltered.

The city of Dara plays a strong part in these chapters of Gordon's story. During the revolt caused by Haroun, the pretender to the throne of Darfur, its people were shut within its walls. They had heard nothing from without for six months, and when, one day, there was a sudden stir at the gate, and the Governor-General himself rode into their midst, they were dumb-founded. It was, says Gordon, in his trenchant graphic way—"It was like the relief of Lucknow." The illustration, so full of moving memories and great suggestions, was only just. As Gordon advanced, dangers gathered on every side, until, as Mr. Hake happily puts it, he was "ringed about with perils." A crisis came, which needed all his energy and indomitable will to keep him master of the situation. His presence in the field against Haroun was urgent; on either hand he was menaced

by powerful tribes; worse than all else, Suleiman, son of Sebehr, the Black Pasha, sat down with six thousand robbers before Dara, and ravaged the land around. In the midst of all this, his army was plotting his life; his secretary fell ill. The measure of his troubles was full indeed. But his spirit never quailed. So rapid were his movements now, that no idea of them can be conveyed in this place; Mr. Hake himself has perforce found it impossible to give more than a sketch of them. Brief and slight as that sketch is, it indicates with a sort of swift dramaticism the marvellous activity and resource of its hero.

Whilst in the heart of all this battling and peril, he heard something which rendered all else as naught. Suleiman, with his six thousand, was on the eve of attacking Dara. Not an instant was lost. Ignoring nondescripts and allies alike, and, as usual, far in advance of his lagging escort of Bashi-Bazouks, Gordon mounted his camel and rode straight away to Dara. The distance was eighty-five miles; he did it in a day and a half, unarmed and alone. "A dirty, red-faced man," covered with flies, he burst upon his people as a thunderbolt; they could not believe their eyes. Next day, as dawn broke over the city, he put on the "golden armour" of his office, and rode to the camp of the robbers, three miles off. The chiefs were awestruck and startled. Gordon drank a glass of water, ordered Suleiman to follow with his people to his divan, and rode back to Dara. The son of Sebehr came with his chiefs, and they sat in a circle in the Governor's divan. Then, in "choice Arabic," as Gordon humorously puts it, Gordon said to them: "You meditate revolt; I know it. You shall have my ultimatum now: I will disarm you and break you up." They listened in a dead silence, and went away to consider. At any moment they could have put Gordon and his "garrison of sheep soldiers" to the sword; amazed by his utter indifference to danger, and quelled, perhaps, by the magic of his eye, they submitted.

Of his further labours in the Soudan and Abyssinia—in the latter country he afterwards had an adventure nearly as dramatic as that just related, and even more dangerous—we cannot now speak. What they were—how varied and difficult, how amusing, how pathetic, and how, after all, they were to be unrequited—all this is written in Mr. Hake's pages; to these the curious

and sympathetic reader must turn for many a romance, many a piece of daring, many a touch of sincere and gentle charity, many an astounding proof of courage, that considerations of space prevent our dealing with here. With that rare modesty of his, and with an heroic and suggestive brevity like the diction of the Bible, Gordon has said: "I have cut off the slave-dealers in their strongholds, and I made the people love me." It is true. To this day the poor blacks of the Soudan beg the white traveller to send back to them the "good Pasha," and it is the knowledge of this, the certainty of his influence upon the people, of his personal magnetic power over the wild savages and pastoral blacks of the Soudan—these are the things which feed the hopes all of us cherish for the success of the mission upon which, after the eleventh hour has struck, he has been hurriedly despatched.

COMPULSORY THRIFT.

THE truth of the saying that Heaven helps those who help themselves, is not in any way affected by the inexorable ethical law, which imposes on all members of a community the duty of helping each other. The difficulties which surround the fulfilment of that duty are manifold, but, as regards the recipients, they may be broadly classed, as by John Stuart Mill, into two sets of consequences to be considered. These are, "the consequences of the assistance itself, and the consequences of relying on the assistance."

The onerous importance of the last of the "two sets" becomes very prominent in cases of colliery accidents and other disasters affecting the circumstances of large numbers of people. The immediate consequences of help afforded in exceptional times of calamity must be always, or nearly always, beneficial. But the after-consequences, especially in industrial communities, open up serious possibilities. There are difficulties, local and peculiar to each event. But the broad and general difficulties, in the way of public subscriptions to repair disaster in such cases, are that the assurance that assistance will be forthcoming may tend to discourage habits of providence, may render men less attentive to the ordinary precautions of their avocations, and less dependent on their own energies, skill, and foresight. A charity which deteriorates the moral fibre of its

object may be ultimately more harmful than immediately beneficial. Another difficulty is that emotional charity goes usually too far, while ordinary charity does not go far enough. Those who are suddenly left destitute by some appalling accident which wrings the public heart, may, by a spasm of generosity, be better provided for to the end of their days than they ever had any reasonable expectation of being, while the great normal mass of destitution in the country is left to the partial and ineffectual care of Poor Law officials and individual philanthropists. There is no lack of charity in the world, but it is woefully ill-directed and is too often hopelessly wasted.

Whether or not charity should take the form of public subscriptions for permanent provision, in the case of accidents to operatives, incurred in the pursuit of their daily business, is a matter admitting of much discussion. There can be no doubt, however, that if the needful assistance could be assured without spasmodic public action, it would be infinitely preferable. There is but one way in which this can be done, viz., by insurance. The Post Office and other institutions offer means to the working man by which, for a small payment, he can secure provision for his family, and also for himself during temporary disablement. But the little word "can" makes all the difference. The voluntary acceptance of the advantages of insurance implies an amount of prudence, and thought, and thrift which are the characteristics, not of the majority, but of the minority of men. The men who voluntarily insure against death and accidents are probably those who, in the absence of the facilities offered, would lay by something every week against a rainy day. It is to provide for the improvident and thoughtless that these large public subscriptions are so often needed. Hence has arisen one of the great questions of the day: Should the relief of improvidence be voluntary or compulsory? It is admitted that we cannot make men sober by Act of Parliament. Is it possible to make them thrifty by Act of Parliament?

The Germans, at any rate, seem to think it is. They are going to try it, and there are some points about the Workman's Insurance Bill, which has lately passed the Reichstag, which merit our careful consideration.

It has been found that in Germany, only twelve and a half per cent. of the work-people joined voluntary benefit societies.

Therefore a system of compulsory insurance has been instituted, and is to be introduced into all branches of industry, except in agriculture, where the existing provisions are believed to be adequate.

The law will apply to all persons paid by salary or wages in mining, shipping, manufacturing, and mechanical operations, with certain limitations in the case of managers, clerks, and persons temporarily employed. The funds of existing benefit societies are not to be interfered with, but the government will fix the minimum and maximum assistance to be given. Employers of labour are to contribute the funds, two-thirds of which they will collect from the men in deductions from wages, and the remaining third they will provide themselves. Both the contributions and the assistance are to be gauged in proportion to the wages paid, and the assistance for medical attendance and maintenance while a man is unable to follow his calling, will be at the rate of fifty per cent. of his usual wages, beginning from the third day after his illness, and continuing, if necessary, for thirteen weeks.

The Act is a provision both against sickness and accident. The funds, although under government control, are not to be centralised, but each trade may organise its own fund, or several trades may join. In the case of such organisations, the trades may fix the amounts of contributions by the members, but these must not, to begin with, exceed two per cent. of the wages, nor ever exceed three per cent. of the wages. Nor must the assistance granted ever be reduced below the minimum fixed by government. The government charges itself with the custody and investment of the funds, and the state is thus the insurer.

No operative, however improvident, can avoid saving so much as will guard him from destitution, and the receipt of assistance from the funds will not interfere with his civil rights as would the receipt of poor-law relief.

Another experiment in compulsory thrift has been begun in Australia. The scheme in this case is that every male member of the community shall be compelled to pay, in his youth or on attaining his majority, a sum proportioned to his circumstances, but not less than ten pounds, which shall be appropriated and invested by the state, in order to secure him against destitution during sickness, for the remainder of his life.

Neither the German nor the Australian

scheme is novel in conception. Both have been frequently proposed for this country, and have been discussed by economists and in Parliament. But in both instances the schemes are for the first time going to be put to a practical test, and the issue will be watched with the deepest interest.

It has been argued that because it is incumbent on a state to compel every parent to educate his child, therefore it is also incumbent on a state to compel every person to make provision for the future. There is, however, no analogy between compulsory education and compulsory thrift. The state must recognise the evident duty of every man to provide for his offspring, and it is proper that it should interfere to compel him. It is proper for a state to insist on compliance with regulations to prevent the spread of disease, and it is proper for a state to insist on the members of a community supporting its friendless paupers.

We have a compulsory Poor Law which provides for the results of thriftlessness, but it does not follow that we should have the state to interfere to prevent thriftlessness. In fact, the effect of such interference would be to destroy individual thrift. It seems paradoxical to say, but it is true, that thrift which is compulsory is not thrift. That which is done on compulsion ceases to be a virtue.

Writing of the poor laws, John Stuart Mill said: "If the condition of a person receiving relief is made as eligible as that of the labourer who supports himself by his own exertions, the system would strike at the root of all individual industry and self-government." The Poor Law system does not do this, but a compulsory benefit society would render the future of a careless, thriftless, and self-indulgent man as free from care and destitution as that of the provident, thrifty, prudent, thoughtful man.

The less interference we have of the state, in affairs which men can and should manage for themselves, the better. The experiences of our voluntary benefit and insurance societies show us vastly better results than seem to have been attained in Germany. These societies are capable of development to sufficient extent to meet the case on voluntary principles. It should be the aim of all leaders and teachers to endeavour to raise the masses to a belief in, and a dependence on, their own manliness, not be always craving and clamouring for the state to do that which they should do themselves. Compulsory

thrift, we admit, is vastly better than universal improvidence, but what is better than all is that Labour should recognise its own dignity, and should realise that providence is its mainspring, and thrift its motor. Sixpence set aside from each week's wages as a voluntary provision for the future, is worth a shilling exacted by law for the same end. Thrift, like temperance, should grow from seeds sown within. While, therefore, it will be interesting to watch the progress of the German and Australian experiments, it is much more gratifying to observe the large and steady growth of our own Foresters and Oddfellows, and other friendly and industrial societies.

BETWEEN TWO STOOLS.

A STORY IN TWO CHAPTERS. CHAPTER I.

"I HAVE something to tell you, Mary."

Mary Ranley let her work fall into her lap, and looked up at the speaker. She was a tall, slim, dark-haired woman of seven or eight and twenty, with a plain, patient face, and wistful eyes. She wore a dress of a quiet grey tint, and the room in which she was seated was furnished with all the good taste that nowadays is consistent with strict economy. She had not a single claim, in feature or colouring, to any of the acknowledged forms of prettiness, and yet something about her would have compelled a second glance from those who had obtained a first.

"Well, Tom, what is it?" Her face softened as her glance fell on Tom Danvers, handsome, blue-eyed, fair-haired Tom, whom people spoke of only to praise. They had been playfellows, these two, who were alike only in years. They were lovers now, and they would be husband and wife one day, at least that hope had beautified existence for both of them during seven years. Seven years! It is a big slice out of the best part of the allotted threescore and ten, though it was only lately that one of this faithful pair had begun to think so. The other had never thought it yet. "What is it you have to tell me?"

Tom crossed the room, and bent over her to stroke her hair. The movement was a caress, and then it enabled him to avoid her eyes.

"I have been offered an appointment at Rangoon."

"At Rangoon." She echoed the words without any intonation of surprise. "That is——?"

"In Burmah. As if you did not know that and everything else, my little scholar; and Rangoon is a big place with openings for lots of fellows. Stephens has written, saying he needs a partner, and so I think, if you don't mind, that I shall go out there in a month or two."

Mary Ranley did not answer. In the pause that ensued she heard the purring of the cat on the hearth, and smelt the faint odour of the mignonette growing in the window-box. She knew quite well that the linnets outside were piping to the roses, and that Tom Danvers was waiting for her answer; but she also knew that her pulses were growing fainter and fainter, and that the weight of a long-dreaded blow had fallen.

"Are you not getting on here?" she asked after a pause. "I thought you told me that your work was increasing; I thought you expected that we might marry in the spring."

"It was all a mistake, due to my confounded hopefulness. I got a new case or two when Smithson was away for his holidays, but he holds the patients, and will go on holding them. The fact is, Mary, there is not scope here for two medical men, and I knew that, though I settled in the place when you wished it. But I have not made a hundred pounds in the past twelve months, and you know that means failure."

"But I make a good deal by my teaching, and I thought that, working together, we might get on."

"That is quite out of the question," he said fretfully, turning away from the pleading, patient eyes. "I am not going to have my wife drudging all day long that we may not starve. I'll support her myself, or do without her."

The pale hands lying on the piece of needlework pressed each other a little, then the sweet voice spoke softly and firmly:

"I have been thinking often lately, Tom, that you would be wiser to do without me. You see we have known each other so long that we have really grown to be more friends than lovers, and I am far older than you in reality, though not perhaps in years, and so I cannot help believing at times that our engagement has been a mistake."

"Oh, you do, do you?" wrathfully.

"You see it has lasted seven years now, and in seven years, you know, your science teaches that we change completely, and so I think, Tom dear, that it would be far better if you planned your future without

letting any thought of me hamper you. I am safe enough, you know; the high-school pays me a comfortable salary, and I have grown accustomed to the routine of life with Mrs. Gillet, and so, dear, I can offer quite honestly to set you free." She was smiling at him bravely, and her eyes were very clear and bright, but she had an idea that her heart was weeping.

"You are tired of me, I suppose? You imagine that I am likely to be a failure, and you women care only for success," he answered bitterly.

"I suppose the working ones of us know that success comes some time to the steady and patient," she said, the first hard tone sounding in her voice.

"And have I not been either?"

"Dear Tom, don't imagine that I wish to find fault or criticise, I love you far too well for that; there is no one in all the world as dear to me as you are. But do you not think yourself that our engagement has been too protracted to seem hopeful now? You don't feel it as I do; it seems to take all my strength away to see our life together always slipping farther and farther off."

"If I make things worse for you, of course that alters matters." His face had lost its smiling softness, his brow was stern and angry.

"You are my youth and my happiness, the end of all my dreams," she said passionately; "the want of you will leave my whole future barren."

"Then why need you give me up?"

"Because I think you will be freer without me, because you are learning to dread me, and so the love is growing imperfect."

"It was for your sake I thought of Rangoon," he said sullenly.

"Yes, dear, and it is for your sake, Heaven knows, that I propose to give you up. I am a drag on you, and what you feel for me is far more friendship than love."

"If you think so I have nothing more to say." He rose to go stiffly, and then the tender heart in her failed.

"Oh, Tom, if it were not best for you, do you think I would have spoken?"

She wanted him to tell her that it was not best for him, she wanted him to prove to her that all her doubts were needless; but she had hurt him, and at her relenting he hardened himself.

"If it is best for you, that is enough," he said, and took his hat and left her without looking at her again.

When the door had closed behind him Mary Ranley sat five minutes motionless. The airy bubble she had spent seven years blowing, was shattered by her own touch. She scarcely realised what had happened yet, but there was a numb aching at her heart, far worse than any keen, comprehending pang. Her tears began to flow heartbrokenly, as she mechanically folded the piece of the poor little trousseau on which she had been working, the trousseau that never would be needed now. Tom was gone, and Tom was the lover of her whole life; but—and in this capacity she would miss him far more—he had always been her pet and protégé. What would her motherly nature do now, without any one to plan for or protect?

Women's sorrows seek consolation in the strangest ways. In the first hour of her loss Mary Ranley went up among the gathered treasures of seven hopeful years, and touched with reverent fondness the accumulated trifles destined for the future home. There were the little bronzes meant for Tom's study, and purchased out of the economies of her holiday-time; there were pretty vases, and little brackets, and scraps of tasteful china—all the feminine trifles that would have given a homeliness to his bare lodgings. She remembered where she had gathered them up—sometimes in Tom's presence—and even the words he had said in jest over one thing and another. And now Tom was out of her life, and there never would be any home for them together. She felt as if the big oak chest were a coffin containing all her youth as she locked it, shutting the relics out of her sight; and then she went down and drank her solitary tea and tried to realise all the emptiness of the coming years.

Would he write to her, she wondered, or would she be left always without tidings? And when would he go? And would he be relieved that they had parted, after the first edge of pain had worn off?

Six days passed without even an indirect word from him, and the morning's work was acquiring a maddening monotony, and the evening's silence a despairing loneliness. Mary had few girl-friends and no confidantes, and so her heart-ache missed the common alleviation of talking it over. If he never came or wrote, if she never heard of him again, there was no one in all the world to help or comfort her.

But he would not be cruel enough to treat her with silence for ever; he would send her a message one day, and it

would be one of peace and friendship. That faith grew in her day by day, battling with the growing despair; and then one day fact ranged itself on faith's side—a letter awaited her as she returned from the walk she had taken to escape from her thoughts.

She held it between her hands for a moment without looking at it, and all her fictitious strength gave way. She threw aside the cloak that had suddenly become a burden, and sat down in her bonnet to read Tom's message.

But the letter was not from Tom; she saw that as she unfolded it. The writing was bigger, bolder, more legible. She read it all through before she reached the signature. When she had seen that she read the letter again. It was from John Hayward, the man she had always thought Mousie Graham's lover, and it contained an offer of marriage for herself.

"I have loved you always, Mary," he wrote, "and I have only refrained from telling you so because I had so little to offer till now. I did not dare ask you to share a worse home than you have been accustomed to, and so I held my peace. But at last I have attained to what I have honestly coveted so long; at last Armstrong and Co. have made me head of my department, and so I dare, after a devotion nearly as protracted as Jacob's, to ask you for my own."

It was a plain manly statement, and it went to Mary Ranley's sore heart. There was no gush, no agony of passion in it; nothing but the simple tale of a man who had known how to be very patient and faithful. Yet his love for her startled her inexpressibly. She had never dreamed of it. There had never seemed anything but the merest good-comradeship in his attitude towards her—but of course his silence and self-restraint rendered his love all the more flattering, and John would make a good husband. Mary had an idea that the man who lived straightly and earnestly would love steadfastly, and she felt that the woman who became John Hayward's wife would have all chances of happiness in her favour. For an instant she wished this offer had come years before. Now, although Tom was not half so fine a character as John Hayward, she loved him, and that made all the difference.

When she came to think of it, it was odd that John made no mention of Tom. Surely he had known she was engaged to him; surely they had always made that patent to everyone? Mary Ranley sat

thinking over her offer in all its bearings, till the fire waned and her tea was ice-cold.

John Hayward's offer was unexpected, but it was very fair and manly. She almost started to find she was considering it, that opposing counsel seemed to be arguing the pros. and cons., with herself for judge and jury. On one side were love, and ease, and pleasure; on the other side was a barren life, holding only the memory of a disappointment. She was not a heroine, and teaching for her bread during a whole lifetime seemed sad and lonely enough.

But then, would not marriage with another than Tom seem almost sacrilege, after all they had planned together? Why, their whole future had been mapped out with each other, and union with John Hayward would be but a dreary deception.

Then she went on to think of her pupils, whom she did not and could not love. She had no theories about them. They met her as units without individuality. They obeyed her because they feared her; they would defy her if they dared. And then there were her fellow-teachers—Miss Griffiths, who was growing so old and odd; Miss Henderson, whom her class made a habit of tricking and deceiving, because she was short-sighted and tolerant, as the ageing so often grow. Would she, Mary Ranley, ever find herself in the case of these—ever see herself lonely, uncared for, just endured for want of a better? Oh no! Rather a hundred times a marriage into which friendship and respect at least would enter.

Her letter was written hurriedly at last, and when it was finished it was an acceptance. But she told John Hayward the truth. She had loved Tom Danvers honestly for years, but now that they had parted she did not think any memory of him would ever rise up between her and the husband she was prepared to accept and honour. She wrote this all quite calmly but, when it was finished, she felt, somehow as though she were twenty years older than she had been, and as if life had suddenly become quite humdrum and common place. Yet she had no thought of changing her mind. She rang the bell composedly for Bessie, the little maid-of-all-work, and gave her the letter with a hand that never faltered.

"This is your evening out, I think Bessie. You may post this for me on your way through the village," she said, bethinking herself even of the little servant's affairs in that crisis of her life.

"Yes, miss, surely," Bessie answered, blushing, for she too had a lover, and these evenings out meant the joy of the whole week.

Somehow Miss Ranley felt that she wanted the letter out of her reach, and vacillation out of her power.

CHAPTER II.

"I HAVE come to make things right. I can't do without you, Mary; you are my sheet-anchor; I have felt adrift since I lost you."

So Tom Danvers spoke, hurrying after her as she came home from afternoon school.

There was a drizzling rain falling, and the landscape was blurred, and the heavy clouds hung low, and the woman knew that the face she turned to her lover was pinched and white.

"I thought you had gone, Tom; it is so long since I heard of you."

"It is a week, and perhaps you did not ask about me. I never thought of going in any mad hurry like that. There is nothing decided even yet."

"Is there not? I thought—I had an idea there was," she answered falteringly.

"Oh no. Stephens only wrote to offer me the appointment, and I went to consult you about it when you took me up so shortly." There was a tone of reproach in his voice, for he felt still that he had been badly used.

"I did not mean to hurt you," she protested meekly.

"Well, perhaps some fellows don't mind being thrown over after seven years' waiting, and just as there is a prospect of something definite at last!"

"The prospect seemed very vague to me," smiling faintly.

"Oh, because you would not listen. Stephens offers me either three hundred as a salary, or a share in the proceeds, whichever I like, and he says the climate is good and living not very high; and I had almost persuaded myself, Mary, that we might go out together—married. But still, if you prefer me to grub on here I shall do it, so as you continue to love me."

She had stopped, and they faced each other, and he saw now how pale she was.

"I would go with you to Rangoon if I could; it all seems so easy now when it is too late," she answered with a break in her voice.

"And why is it too late?"

"Because I have promised to marry another man."

"You have? Well, certainly, you have not lost any time."

"I have not."

She could have laughed with the dreariest, most dismal mirth. She was so contemptible in her own eyes; all she had done looked so strange and uncalled-for. Why, that very morning her senses had returned, and she knew that a brave, strong-hearted, successful woman—for she was successful in her own way—has no right to throw herself on any man's charity, just because he loves her, and because her life-story has been mistold. If she had only waited to post her letter next day herself it would never have reached its destination. Now John Hayward had her promise.

There was no escaping from the position in which she had placed herself; there was no possibility of showing herself even excusable; she certainly had hastened with all speed from the old love to the new.

"I had thought you so different from that," Tom said with bewildered incredulity; "I thought you would have been faithful to me even if we had parted—for a while, at least."

"But I was weaker and meaner, you see. I wanted some one to keep me in idleness and buy me fine dresses and treat me well, and, when you could not do it, I closed with the offer of the first man who could." She seemed to take a certain bitter pleasure in her self-accusation now.

"Oh, Mary, I can't believe it, it's not possible! You who were always so high and far removed from the temptations that beset ordinary women!" he burst forth, groaning.

"You overrated me; I overrated myself. You see now I am not worth taking to Rangoon, not worth loving or thinking about."

"But is it really true? Are you not torturing me with a cruel jest?"

"It is quite true; I have promised to be another man's wife, and I wrote him that no thought of you would ever stand between us," she answered, arraigning herself.

"Then you are a heartless woman, and I shall never forgive you!" he burst forth, pronouncing judgment on the spot, and then he rushed past her, and out of her sight, while she continued her solitary way with laggard steps, and a heart that lay in her bosom heavy as lead.

What can she do now? She has sown the wind, and the harvest of the whirlwind has been very swift and bitter. She has dallied with temptation, and her

momentary unfaithfulness has cost her self-respect. But she will be true to herself at last; she will recall the promise that should never have been given. It will not matter as far as her happiness is concerned, but it will be the first step in the painful process of self-restoration.

When her recantation was written there was a load off her mind; but she was not in any fever of impatience to post this letter, it would keep till she was on her way to school. After the hurried emotions of the last twenty-four hours she was physically tired, and so she sat rocking herself backwards and forwards in her wicker chair with a faint sensation of relief in the motion.

Twilight was fading, and timid little stars were trembling into the sky beyond the uncurtained windows, when there came a soft tap to the door, and Mousie Graham's rosy, roguish face peeped in.

"Oh, you are not busy—thank goodness for that! I was half afraid I might find you deep in the Differential Calculus, and I did so want a good long chat."

"Come in, dear, I am so glad to see you; it is an age since you were here before." Mary took the soft little face between her hands, and kissed the delicious pink cheeks.

"Grannie has been worse lately, weaker and more fretful, and so I felt I could not leave her without a special errand."

"But she is better to-day?"

"Oh yes, ever so much better, and then Aunt Lizzie came to pay her a little visit, so I left Grannie with her, and ran over to see you."

"That was very good of you, dear."

"Oh no, it was not; I came on business." Mousie laughed and flushed a little, then she drew a letter from her pocket. "This came addressed to me yesterday, but it is evidently meant for you. It is from that booby, John Hayward; he is always in the clouds, or among the cog-wheels of his looms, and so the result is a blunder." She unfolded the sheet as she spoke, and handed it to Mary, and this is what stood before the latter's astounded eyes:

"DEAR MISS RANLEY,—In the pleasant excursion we had together last summer, I remember your mentioning a book on ferns that you desired to have, but could not get, as you had forgotten the author's name. I have just come across a volume by Teakerstone, the opening chapter of which is on the *Osmunda regalis*. If you think this is the work in question I shall be happy to forward it to you.—Sincerely yours,
JOHN HAYWARD."

Mary Ranley was sure some complex machinery in her head had got out of order, so loud and persistent was the whirring in her ears.

When she spoke at last, her voice sounded faint and far away.

"Is your name Mary?"

"Of course it is, or rather Mary Ann, but everyone calls me Mousie except John Hayward. He thought Mousie no name for a girl, and so he always called me Mary—Miss Mary; it did sound so funny."

"Then, Miss Mary, I have an offer of marriage for you. It came to me, and naturally enough I took it to myself."

Mousie was so flurried that she did not notice her friend's perturbation.

"I fancied," she said, holding the letter in her hand, but not looking at it, "that he must have been writing to me, and had mixed the covers. That is so like your very clever people! But how lucky the letter came to an engaged girl!"

"Well, I don't see the luck of it, for I wrote yesterday and accepted him."

"Oh, Mary! And Tom!"

"Tom and I had quarrelled, and John's letter came at my worst moment, so I accepted him."

Poor Mousie's eyes grew dim.

"In that case, Mary, I suppose you had better keep the letter," she said, faltering a little. "It was really sent to you, and, after all, I don't mind so very much."

"You are a generous little darling, but there is no necessity for your sacrifice even if Mr. Hayward would permit it. I wrote him my recantation this afternoon. There is the letter; you can send it to him with your own. He will be sure of its genuineness that way."

Then the two girls kissed and cried over each other, and after the exchange of divers confidences Mousie went away, carrying John's letter, still unread, in her hand.

After she had gone Mary took out her needlework with an undefined feeling that chaos had come again, and that in the midst of it it was well to hold on to some commonplace everyday employment.

By-and-by Bessie came in with the tea-tray, and as she flitted about the table Mary spoke with the feeling of desperation which makes us always want to lay a finger on our wound.

"You posted my letter last night, Bessie?"

Bessie paused, the picture of consternation.

"Oh, miss, I'm afraid I forgot all about it."

"You forgot to take it out, I suppose?" speaking in a voice so high and eager that it scarcely sounded like her own.

"Oh no, miss, I took it, and put it in my waterproof-pocket, but Peter met me before I reached the office, and then I forgot; but I'll run out with it now in a minute."

"Bring it to me instead, please; I don't want it posted now."

Bessie never knew till this hour why Miss Ranley gave her five shillings instead of the scolding she expected, neither does John Hayward understand why letter number one never reached him.

Tom Danvers went to Rangoon, as he had said, in much disgust and despair. Mary's unfaithfulness had turned the sunlight into darkness for him, but through his pain a certain resolution to be and do something grew daily. He would forget her, he would never speak of her, and if men uttered her name he would turn aside, but he would do so well with his own life that one day she would know him the superior of the man she had married. So, in much wrath and scorn, he sailed away to succeed or fail as might be.

As for Mary, her life was all at the dead level of monotony now. There was always the morning's work, always the evening's enforced idleness, and periodically the long empty holidays in which her loneliness grew only more assertive. Like many another she was learning that—

It is not in the shipwreck and the strife
We feel benumbed, and wish to be no more,
But in the after silence on the shore,
When all is lost, except a little life.

She was growing old, she would soon be thirty, and already there were white threads in the glossy smoothness of her hair, and she knew she was growing odder and more unsocial than Miss Griffiths or Miss Henderson had ever been. But she was a good teacher, she was a success in the high-school, and she clung to that poor triumph as her last source of happiness. It was she, the strong one, who would do a small work in a small groove all her life, and Tom who would grow to success and power. But she deserved that for her wrong estimate of both of them. And everyone knew he was doing well and that he had forgotten her. Why, it was only the other day that Mr. Wheelhouse had stopped her to tell her that he had just

been asking Tom by letter why he was neglecting Mary Ranley.

"It was very good of you," she had said, going home with another shaft rankling in her sore heart.

It was dusk as she went wearily down the street. The early October night was closing in, and broad bands of light from open doors fell across her path. The street was very still and empty, and she felt thankful for that and for the coming peace of her solitary parlour. But she stood for an instant on the doorstep to watch the trembling stars, before she rang the bell.

Bessie answered it with a beaming face. She was very fond of Miss Ranley, who had always been kind to her.

"There is a visitor for you in the parlour, miss."

"Oh, very well." Mary expected one of the pupil-teachers who wanted a certificate; she went upstairs and put her outdoor things away, and brushed her hair, and then came down to be the schoolmistress at home. But it was not Jane Blakeney who rose at her entrance, but a tall, brown-bearded man, who looked into her face, and then held out his hands to her without a word.

"Tom!" she said with a little fluttering sigh; "Tom!"

"Yes, it is I. I came back as soon as ever I knew you were free."

"I have not deserved it."

"Perhaps not; but then, you see, I could not do without you. I need someone to scold me and keep me right."

"Oh no, Tom, never again; old things and old habits are all ended."

"And you threw the other fellow over?"

"No, not that exactly; it was all a mistake—all my pride and his stupidity; but I have been well punished for everything. I never thought you would come back."

"I did not mean to come back till I found there was no getting on without you."

And then Mary burst into tears, and stood sobbing against his shoulder:

"Oh, Tom, I have missed you so!" she said.

"Well, I am here now to take care of you; won't that be reversing the old order of things?" smiling at her fondly.

And so it came about that Mary Ranley, despite her dangerous hesitation between two stools, found a comfortable seat on one of them, after all.

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal

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PRICE TWOPENCE

A DRAWN GAME.

BY BASIL.

AUTHOR OF "LOVE THE DEBT," ETC.

CHAPTER XIX. "B. TUCK FEELS."

THUS fate interfered to forward the plans of Mrs. Tuck. Ida was drawn towards Dick, not merely by his heroism, but by the entirely new conception his heroism gave her of his character, while her altered bearing towards him set right his misconception of her. She was, he now saw, not cold and proud, not generally even, and certainly not towards him. In truth, Dick began to believe his aunt's suggestion that Ida was inclined to care for him. It was the most natural mistake in the world for him to make. In the first place, he was—as he hardly could help being with his personal advantages—something of a coxcomb; in the second place, as he took everything that was done for him for granted, gratitude was a feeling to which he was not given himself, and which he could not well conceive in another; and in the third place, Ida's gratitude was the less conceivable to him in that he knew it had no ground. For it is harder to realise in another a feeling whose basis we know to be imaginary, than one whose basis we know to be real. Thus Dick came to take Ida's gratitude for a warmer feeling.

Now, that Ida was beginning to care for him was enough to make Dick begin to care for her. It would not have been so in every girl's case, or in the case of most girls; rather the contrary. If they had made their affections cheap he would have held them cheap. But it was not possible, even for him, to hold La Superba cheap. She was simply lowered to his reach, that was all. There are some things a man doesn't covet because they are too cheap, and there are others he doesn't covet

because they are too dear; but, if these last are brought unexpectedly just within his means, he covets them. Now, though Dick was just the man to think little of a girl who made little of herself, he was also just the man not to think at all of a girl who made too much of herself. Difficulties daunted him, and he would enter for no race that he was not certain to win in a canter. *Couleur de rose*, as he said, was his winning colour, and "*Rien ne réussit comme le succès*" his motto. But now La Superba had suddenly shown herself at once winning and to be won, and Dick, therefore, came to regard the suit suggested to him by his aunt as both pleasant and practicable.

He did not again urge his magnanimous objection that it was unfair to the girl to keep off competition by the report that Mr. Tuck had disinherited her.

As for Ida, she at last began to believe that there might be some truth in Mrs. Tuck's reiterated assurances of the strength and delicacy of Dick's passion for her. That worthy woman would artfully deplore Dick's rescue of Ida on the sole ground that it would make him more magnanimously resolute than ever to stifle his love. For would not his suit now seem like a sordid pressing for the payment of a debt? Hardly had Ida ceased to be an heiress, and so become approachable by the disinterested Dick, than this other and greater obstacle to his suit presented itself. It was too bad.

Certainly this regretting the bite of a mad dog only for its effect on the super-fine feelings of the hero was an effective stroke of Mrs. Tuck's. For how fervent must be the feeling which could think only of this consequence of so horrible an accident—how fervent and how generous! Not incredibly generous, either, for was not

the captain's whole bearing in this business from first to last generosity itself? Thus was Ida brought over to the other side altogether in her views of Dick's feelings and motives.

Mrs. Tuck's satisfaction at seeing the fruit ripen in her forcing-house, under her eyes, may be imagined. Dick, it is true, was not a passionate or impetuous lover, but he conveyed to Ida, through his eyes, the pressure of his hand, and ever hovering attentions, as much passion as was compatible with his aunt's account to the girl of the conflict in his soul between a longing and a reluctance to press a suit that seemed ungenerous upon her. Now, however, the time had come, to Mrs. Tuck's thinking, when Dick might confidently shake the tree, instead of looking up at the fruit with an indolent longing. The time had come, only the man and the opportunity were wanting; these Mrs. Tuck must prepare.

"I think, Dick, we must go to this affair at Woolstenholme."

"Yes?" inattentively; and then indifferently: "What affair?"

"This opening of the Art Exhibition. The Duke of Connaught is to open it."

"But why must we go?" asked Dick in much perplexity. "It isn't like church?"

Church attendance he regarded as one of the most oppressive of the taxes of etiquette.

"Just what it is like, Dick. Everyone makes believe as much there, and is as glad to get through the catalogue as the Litany."

"Why on earth do you want to go then?"

"The whole country will be there; and, besides, Ida ought to see it."

"I don't think she need do a provincial one. If it was London or Paris it would be different."

"But perhaps she might like to go. They say the duchess means to be there."

"Oh, if she likes to go," in a tone of querulous disgust. "I can put in the day with Dacres."

"If she goes, you go, Dick. I want you to take her round," very significantly. "I shall not stir off the first chair I can get hold of, I promise you."

"Well," replied Dick, after a pause of meditation, during which he took well in the meaning of his aunt's significant tone and nod; "well, after all, it isn't half a bad place to spend a day in if you let the pictures alone and keep clear of the band."

"Besides," added Mrs. Tuck, in her delight at Dick's complaisance; "besides, I mean to exhibit you two. There'll be no finer picture in the place."

"What will you call us in the catalogue, aunt?"

"The Proposal,' Dick. How will that do?"

"With 'B. Tuck fecit,' underneath."

"Marriages are made in heaven, Dick."

"And are turned out of the factory, when they're made, like other goods. Hadn't I better linger a little longer in Paradise, aunt?"

Dick thought all movement in matters of business premature, and was not so madly in love as to make this proposal an exception. At the startling mention of marriage he began to waver in his adhesion to his aunt's programme. Nevertheless, as we shall see, he precipitated matters. For even with Dick love was liable to bolt.

At this point of the conversation, Ida's entrance gave Mrs. Tuck an opportunity to nail Dick's colours to the mast.

"Richard wants to take us to this Woolstenholme affair, Ida."

"It's the last place I thought you'd care to go to, Captain Brabazon."

"I shouldn't care to go there by myself, I confess; but aunt thinks you might be persuaded to come."

"I should like very much to go, thank you; but won't it be a very long day for you, Mrs. Tuck?"

"Oh, aunt goes as an exhibitor, which makes all the difference."

"Is Mr. Tuck sending his old china?" in a tone of the most natural amazement at the recklessness of this risk.

"Oh dear no. Something much less precious. It's yourself, Miss Luard. Aunt says you'll be the picture of the exhibition."

"What will you enter me as, Mrs. Tuck?" turning in some confusion from the admiration expressed in Dick's eyes to ask this, as the first question which occurred to her, of Mrs. Tuck.

"As 'The Duchess,'" thinking to pay Dick back by the introduction of one of his names for Ida.

Dick, however, was not disconcerted in the least.

"It would be unfair to the other duchess," again pointing the compliment with a look of fervent and unaffected admiration.

Mrs. Tuck, seeing Dick's ardour and

Ida's consciousness, opportunely remembered that she was due at the side of her poor dear husband.

Dick, the creature of the moment, felt carried off his feet by a gust of sudden passion. Two minutes ago he was meditating an escape from an immediate proposal, to which now he felt compelled irresistibly. To do him justice, we must allow that his instability was not to blame altogether for this revulsion of feeling. Ida, looking her loveliest in her blushing consciousness of his admiration, was also to blame for it. It was not possible for any man with Dick's idea in his head, that this superb beauty cared for him, not to feel his longing at this moment to secure her. But did she care for him? Yes and no. She had now come to admire Dick immensely, not physically, where he was admirable, but morally, where he was not admirable at all. But admiration is not as near akin to love as pity. There is, however, another feeling which, in a woman, is nearer akin to love than either—gratitude; and this Ida felt deeply towards Dick, for her life and for his love. Of his love she had now the daily assurance, not only of Mrs. Tuck's vehement declarations, but of Dick's own implicit declarations, not to be mistaken. It was possible, even, that his love, as Mrs. Tuck asserted—seemingly on the best authority—dated from his first visit, when Dick suppressed it for the magnanimous reason assigned by his aunt, for had he not disclosed utterly unexpected depths in his nature of late? Might not love itself have lain latent under that still surface? Even now it seemed to struggle with his magnanimity, for though it was unmistakable, it seemed sometimes half suppressed.

Still, at times, a feeling as indefinable as a presentiment made her recur to her first estimate of Dick. She would recoil from this—recoil as from some baseness in herself; yet, dwell as she would on facts that looked the other way, she could not shake herself wholly free from it. This is the best account we can give of her chequered, or rather alternating, feelings towards Dick.

Mrs. Tuck having withdrawn herself as a non-conductor, which alone intervened to prevent the completion of the electric circuit, Dick rose to offer Ida, who was still standing, a chair.

"Thank you, I can't stay. Mrs. Casson is waiting orders for which I came to ask Mrs. Tuck, but the exhibition put it out of my head."

"I hoped you'd come," with a look and tone of tenderness that was almost a proposal in itself.

Ida felt that the crisis for which, though she had been so well forewarned of it, she was not forearmed, was upon her. There was nothing she would not have given for the respite of a day, but of this there was no hope.

Dick himself was somewhat unnerved; diffident for the first time in his life, and for the first time fully conscious of his own unworthiness and her worth.

"I am very glad to go," she answered, speaking in short, quick, nervous sentences; "I am very glad to go. I had thought of asking Mrs. Tuck to take me; but I feared it would be too much for her."

"She would trust you to me for the day, if you would. Would you? Would you trust yourself to me then—always—Ida?" He caught and held both her hands in his, looking pleadingly into her troubled eyes. "I know what I ask—what you are—what I am; yet I must speak. I cannot help it. You will forgive me? You will let me hope?"

"It is I that have to ask forgiveness," cried Ida in deep distress. "I owe you so much—everything. But what have I to give? I have nothing to give that you ought to have."

"Owe! You owe me nothing, and nothing you could owe me would be worth the hope of your love. I ask you only for the hope of it, Ida; only to say that you might yet come some time to care for me." Dick's diffidence, it will be seen, was increasing; but the increase of his diffidence increased of course his ardour. Ida had withdrawn one hand, but he still kept the other imprisoned. Dropping suddenly the hand he held, he said in a tone of despair: "But no, you cannot; I see my fate in your face. I should not have spoken. I tried not to speak. I fought against it—against you—against every thought of my heart, every day since first I knew you, Ida. I hoped I had conquered and that I should have spared you this. You will believe me, you will forgive me, and you will forget this mad dream that you could ever come to care for me."

Ida was too inexperienced to know that Dick could not have expressed so rhetorically a passion which really carried him away. Besides, the speech only confirmed Mrs. Tuck's assurance, and was made more credible by Dick's established magnanimity.

Accordingly Ida very naturally felt the deepest admiration of him, and disgust with herself at this moment. Upon Dick's turning away, as though to quit Eden for ever, she put her hand timidly on his arm, and said with a childlike simplicity:

"But I do—I do care for you, only not as I ought, as you ought to expect."

"As I ought to expect!" exclaimed Dick, seizing and kissing the hand that touched his arm. "What ought I to expect? That you should love me as I love you? Ida, I ask only to be allowed to love you, and to hope for your love. I shall win it. If a life's devotion can win it, I shall win it yet."

Dick protested too much, as he always did in his many "promises to pay," but Ida had not now the least distrust of his sincerity. How should she? Had not Dick already shown this devotion—the devotion of his life for hers?

"It is that," she said distressfully; "you give so much, and I have so little to give."

"You would not call it little, Ida, if you knew all it is to me, and it is but the promise of what it will be, of what I shall make it, dear." Here Dick stole his arm about her, and ventured, with a timidity very notable in him, to kiss her on the cheek as the seal of their engagement. He had the tact not to startle what he took for the first timid, dove-like, and diffident hovering of love by further endearments at this moment. Drawing her to the sofa and seating himself there by her side, he spoke more of his happiness than directly of his love, and expressed such exceeding gratitude for the hand he had rather taken than had given him that Ida could not, if she would, have withdrawn it.

Would she have withdrawn it? Certainly, if she had consulted only her own feelings. At the touch of Dick's lips on her cheek she realised intensely the false position into which she had been hurried, and from which there was now no retreat. She felt as though she had sold herself into slavery to pay Dick the great debt she owed him, and yet that this debt was still unpaid—was as far as ever from being paid—and never would be paid. She did not love him as he loved, and as he should be loved, and she had not the least hope that she ever would. But what could she do? Was she to refuse him the little return he asked, which was all he asked, and in which he seemed to place his happiness? And not having refused him at the critical moment, could she now

withdraw the poor, ungracious gift while he was overwhelming her with his gratitude for it?

Indeed, Dick was rather strong in the expression of his gratitude. He thought it the safest subject to dwell on. He was at first taken aback by the discovery that Ida did not love him as he had imagined, that he and his aunt had taken gratitude for love. But there was no going back, and no wish to go back, either. For not only was he more in love, and Ida more lovely and lovable in his eyes at this moment than ever before, but he was little likely to think less of a thing because it had ceased to be cheap—that is not in human nature. Therefore, his ardour redoubled when he found his quarry not so tame as he had expected. There was enough difficulty to give zest to the chase, and yet not enough to daunt even our easy-going Dick. Having got her into his toils he had the tact to see that she might break away again if he startled her before she was absolutely secured; therefore, he dealt delicately with her, expressing only deference in his manner, and gratitude in his words, so cutting off her retreat.

A knock at the door from the justly impatient Mrs. Casson startled them apart, and released and relieved Ida from this embarrassing outburst of gratitude.

While she went to appease the worthy housekeeper, Dick betook himself to the billiard-room to digest his happiness with the help of a cigar. It was not perfect. "The very source and fount of day is dashed with wandering isles of night."

Dick could not help misgivings that he had exchanged the wholesome food of comfort for the intoxicating wine of joy, with its ebb and flow of delirium and depression. Ida was a superb prize, no doubt, but she would be a prize like a crown, uneasy to the head of the wearer, while Dick loved ease of all things. In fact, we cannot better express Dick's misgivings than by the homely image we have already used—he feared he would have to walk on tiptoe for the rest of his days to keep up to Ida's standard.

However, these misgivings, as we have said, were but spots on the sun of his triumph.

Dick's love was like the sun in another respect, its heat diminished in geometric ratio with its distance from its object. In Ida's presence he thought mostly of her; in her absence, mostly of himself. If an irresistible invitation to hunt or shoot had

recalled him to Ireland, the distance would have so cooled his ardour that he would have come to class his love-letters with his debts.

To Dick, thus meditating, entered his aunt.

"Well?" she asked eagerly.

Dick blew slowly a dense cloud of smoke from his lips, and then answered coolly:

"Well, aunt, that's done."

"You've won her?"

"By a neck."

Mrs. Tuck resented Dick's coolness as insulting to Ida.

"You should have won her in a canter, of course!"

"So my trainer led me to think; but you were wrong, altogether, aunt."

"She hasn't refused you!"

"That's just about it. She hasn't refused me, but she has only not refused me. She doesn't care a straw for me."

"Nonsense, Dick! If she accepted you at all, she cared for you. She wouldn't accept a duke if she didn't care for him. You think she's no heart, because she doesn't wear it on her sleeve."

"She's a heart, I dare say, but I haven't it, aunt. She made that plain enough. But she gave me her hand with as good a grace as could be expected."

"If she accepted you, she cared for you," reiterated Mrs. Tuck decidedly.

"You may depend upon that. All the world wouldn't induce her to give her hand without her heart," thinking of Lord Ellerdale and Mr. Seville-Sutton, who, as the impersonations of rank and wealth, represented exhaustively "all the world" to Mrs. Tuck.

"Well, aunt, you ought to know better than I. Modesty was always my weakness."

"It was not your forte, certainly, Dick; but coxcomb as you are, you might easily misunderstand Ida, she's so reserved."

"But she wasn't reserved. She said in so many words that she didn't care for me at all in the way I wished."

"Her girl's nonsense! She thinks love comes like a shower-bath, all at once with a shock; but that douche is soon over and leaves you shivering. 'Love me little, love me long,' Dick."

"Faith, aunt, if she pays it out at the present rate, it ought to last as long as the National Debt."

"It's as secure, anyhow, which is more than you can say of most girls' love, or of any man's. If Ida cares at all for you she'll always care for you; and she does

care for you or she'd not accept you. I don't say she's desperately in love with you, and that kind of thing. Of course not. Such a feeling in a girl like her takes some time to ripen, and some sun, too. And she hasn't got much of that, Dick, you'll allow."

Here Mrs. Tuck carried the war into the enemy's camp, and took Dick roundly to task for the languor of his suit and the apathy of his triumph.

Then she hurried off to assure Ida with her next breath of Dick's ardour and rapture.

"My dearest Ida," embracing her effusively, "you've made me so happy—and him;" then holding Ida from her to look anxiously into her eyes, she added interrogatively: "And yourself?"

"It's happiness to make you happy, Mrs. Tuck," evasively, but with perfect sincerity.

"Nonsense, my dear, you didn't accept him only to please me, or only to please him either. There's love enough on his side for both, but it's not all on his side? You do care a bit for him, dear?"

Mrs. Tuck's question sounded as the echo of Ida's own upbraiding conscience.

"Not as I ought," she answered, with an expression of contrition in her face and voice.

"Not as you think you ought; but you've got such notions, child. You seem to think you should meet your lover half-way, and be as much in love with him as he is with you! Why, how do you think that would work? Pooh! it wouldn't hold together for a month. A man's love, my dear, is like that half-starved foxhound you were pitying yesterday; you must give it food enough to keep it alive; but to keep it keen you must half-starve it. You can give Richard quite as much love as is good for him, or for any man. They're great babies, my dear, and throw away what's in their hand to cry for more. I ought to know them by this time, and I do. Of course, if you really dislike Richard——"

"Dislike him! It is not that, Mrs. Tuck—I like him very much, but I ought to do more than like him."

"My dear Ida, your 'liking' means more than most girls' love. They mean just half what they say, and you say just half what you mean. You don't love Richard as much as he loves you—that was not to be expected, and not to be desired either—but you love him quite

enough to tantalise and torment him, and any woman who knows her business will tell you that this is the great secret and security of constancy in man."

REMINISCENCES OF JAMAICA.

IN THREE PARTS. PART II.

ABOUT the middle of our time in Jamaica, the sides of the roads were observed to be covered with the yellow, sickly-smelling blossoms of the "kill buckra," or yellow-fever flower. Every waste space, even the gravelled yard, at Port Royal, previously quite arid, bloomed like a yellow carpet. Old residents shook their heads and whispered of yellow-fever, with the grim certainty of former experience. Each evening, too, from the beginning of March, a faint and sickening odour, wafted with the first breath of land-wind, stole over Port Royal. It did not last long, and came direct from a sort of lagoon of brackish water beyond the palisade cemetery. Examination of this water revealed a reddish foam, seething up round the edges. Measures were promptly adopted, first to cut a communication between the smelling lake and the fresh, outer sea. This silted up in a very few days. A cut was then made through to the cockle-ponds in the inner harbour, and kept open by dredging, and soon by its own scour, this cut speedily cleansed and purified the putrid lake, whose waters quickly became alive with excellent fish, leaping and jumping with health and vigour. The same smell was reported to have preceded a former yellow-fever epidemic. The men-of-war in harbour were moved to the outer buoys, where a fresher current of air was obtainable, and every sanitary precaution was adopted. But all was in vain—an unwholesome condition of atmosphere evidently existed, containing the germ of what was to be fatal to so many.

The first man, a stoker of the steam-launch plying to Kingston, was seized—and this meant generally to die in three or four days, sometimes in less time. The flagship was overcrowded with supernumeraries for the Pacific, waiting for a vessel to come to Panama and take them on board. Each day these poor souls enquired ever more and more anxiously, "Any news from Panama?" "No telegram from Colon?" till their hearts were sick within them. Each man looked his comrade in the face, and wondered which of them would go next. The good deputy-inspector at the hospital—who, if hourly heroism could win

the Victoria Cross, earned his a hundred times over—stood by the bedside of the dying, some in violent fever held down by black nurses, some in the deadly stertorous coma of approaching dissolution, and wrung his hands in despair at being unable to do anything to save them. Each afternoon about four, the hospital-boat bearing a ghastly burthen wended its way to the palisades, where the living, at arm's-length, at the risk of their lives, laid the dead in long rows. Each night about twelve, one of the galley's crew living at the Admiralty House was seized, till five out of seven were dead. Their cries and groans, as they were borne away in a blanket to the hospital, out of whose gates they were never to come alive, were terrible to hear. I used to listen with miserable dread, till the heavy footstep of the black steward laboured up the stairs and along the silent corridors, lanthorn in hand, to announce, "Anoder boat's crew taken to hospital, sar," with a sort of grim complacency in his own immunity from the terrible scourge.

Our own family all suffered at the same time from attacks more or less severe of bilious remittent fever, from which they rose weak and tottering, "Poor ting, he don't trong, good king!" remarked a kindly black servant, picking up a child who was perpetually tumbling down. One English mail brought out a new chief-clerk for the dockyard, with wife and children; the return steamer took home the clerk and four motherless babes; the poor wife, seized with yellow-fever, had died in the interim. A case was reported at this time, which goes far to prove that to do nothing is better than the best and most careful of nursing. A seaman belonging to a foreign ship unloading at one of the wharves in Kingston, suddenly disappeared in a fit of delirious fever; all thought he had jumped overboard. Six days passed away, he was nearly forgotten, when a black woman came on board to say that a sailor belonging to their ship was lying weak and helpless, but alive, under the piles of the wharf. He was speedily brought on board, gaunt, hollow-eyed, starving. He knew nothing of the time that had passed, but it was certain that for six days he had lain on the wet mud, just above high-water mark—the rise and fall is less than two feet—and that no food or drink could have passed his lips, and yet he survived, while most of his shipmates died. Although no definite conclusion was come to by the

devoted and accomplished medical officers in charge of the hospital as to any really efficacious remedies, it was discovered, I believe for the first time, by actual experiment, that the cause of yellow-fever is a parasite in the blood. If the patient was of weakly constitution, or suffering from any other ailment, the parasite, unable to live in the impoverished blood, died, and the patient recovered; while on the other hand, in the sweet blood of the vigorous and temperate, these creatures thrived and multiplied, till they had consumed all the life-giving properties, when the patient died.

When things seemed at their worst, and the "pestilence that walketh in darkness" had stalked into every nook and corner of the old flagship, bearing off victim after victim trembling to the hospital, it was resolved that the whole of the remaining ship's company and the supernumeraries should be sent north to Bermuda in three vessels. With what joy this decision was hailed by the survivors none can tell. Hope again sprang up in their depressed hearts, they were not to be left quietly and surely to die, uncheered by any prospect of removal as in former times. One dank, muggy, windless day—a condition of atmosphere largely prevailing during this scourge—hot and oppressive beyond conception, all were got on board the three ships, and soon were out of sight on their way to the glad north. No single fatal case occurred after their departure, and all returned in safety several months after. To understand in the least degree the fear felt by gallant men who would cheerfully walk up to the cannon's mouth, or jump overboard under circumstances of the gravest peril to save a comrade, a yellow-fever epidemic must have been personally experienced; the stoutest hearts, when weakened by the contemplation of one overpowering subject, quail before this pestilence. "The air was full of it, weighing like lead upon their spirits. The persistent attendance of a quantity of hoary old Port Royal sharks, which had weathered many a fearsome bout, now swimming slowly round and round the flagship, was of itself a serious distress to the old coxswain. "I misdoubts them sharks," he would observe, turning his quid; "they means Yellow Jack," upon which he applied himself to his favourite specific—rum and peppermint—with renewed zest.

A dull, death-like quiet now settled down over Port Royal; the hospital doors stood wide-open to the air, all its tenants dead or

gone. A man-of-war arriving at this time, fresh from England, saluted the broad pendant as usual outside the reefs; half an hour passed, she was inside the cays, but there was no return salute, nor was a living soul to be seen on the decks of the flagship. Landing at the stairs her captain wended his way, wondering at the extraordinary stillness, to the commodore's office, where he found—alone, his secretary dead, his crews gone north, his family in the hills. The captain afterwards told me that he had never seen so melancholy a sight. The ship was sent immediately to sea, and never had a single case.

After the death of so many fine sailors of the galley's crew, it was not considered desirable for us to remain, as the dockyard and Admiralty House seemed the most infected parts. "Claremont," in the Port Royal mountains, was accordingly taken for us. A long steam to Kingston, a twelve-mile drive to "the gardens," brought us to the foot of the mountains, from there horses to Claremont landed a party of jaded, miserable wretches. Ill as I was, the extraordinary beauty of the view from this place struck me with admiration. The house, even then extremely out of repair, was the usual one-storeyed building with a wide, closed verandah in front, standing on a flat platform of good size, a most unusual feature in the hills, where ten square feet of even ground is a rarity. Cotton-trees of immense height cast a splendid shade all the blazing afternoon over the front of the house. Divested of its most melancholy associations, Claremont is certainly the most attractive site in the island. From here, each crowning its own sharp mountain-top, can be seen Bermuda Mount, Craigton, Strawberry Hill, Ellerslie, Ropley, the Cottage, all comfortable little hill-cottages except Craigton, which having been added to by various governors and magnates who have lived and died there, from time to time, is quite the best mountain residence in Jamaica, possessing even a beautiful little church at the very gates. Above you, at Claremont, are the "everlasting hills," mounting peak by peak into the air; below a winding bridle-road, occasionally peeping into sight, leading to the gardens, the foaming Hope River lying like a silver streak at the bottom of the valley; while, spread out like a map, lie the plains, brightened with the yellow cane-fields of Verley and Robinson's sugar-plantation, Kingston Harbour, Port Royal, and the vast ocean beyond the cays. Ships at anchor or coming

in, looked like flies upon a plan, while the great flag-ship, with her white broad pendant gleaming in the sun, resembled a child's toy. Looking back I could not say that the Aboukir, in full view, was at that time a desirable object. We had left —— and —— alone, at Port Royal, in the very midst of the fever, so that broad pendant, seen through a telescope, became the very focus of anxious interest, showing that —— was, at all events, alive at that moment, which was something in those miserable days to be sure of. A short but sharp attack of yellow-fever prostrated me the day after our arrival in the hills—a not unfrequent circumstance when fever is lurking in the frame, for it is often brought out, not prevented, as might be supposed, by a great change of temperature.

The only facts that remain clearly in my mind are the extraordinary and persistent violence of the headache which accompanied the attack, and the kind and charitable attention bestowed upon me by Dr. W——, of the army medical department, now at Parkhurst, who, regardless of an infected household from Port Royal, rode up and down the mountains from Newcastle on several occasions to see me. By Heaven's mercy my life was spared, while that of many a strong and healthy man was taken.

Far different was the fate of poor —— . Seized with violent fever and delirium within two hours of his arrival at Claremont, he perished in five days, though nursed with the tenderest care. He died in the darkest hours of a night I never remember without a pang. The sun went down in clouds of lurid red, succeeded almost immediately by an inky pall, apparently descending upon the house. A death-like stillness prevailed, no leaf stirred, when, without a moment's warning, one of the fierce mountain hurricanes broke upon us, raging with wild fury all night long. At the moment of ——'s departure a great sobbing blast of wind and rain burst open all the crazy doors, careered howling like a wild beast through the shaking rooms, and out across the valley, only to return again after a moment's pause, with fresh vigour to begin the onslaught anew. The slow dawning of that miserable morning revealed a scene of pitiable desolation without and within. Great trees had been hurled through the air and pitched head-foremost into the ravine below. The wind had worn itself out, but from the earliest break of day a vast troop of vultures, who arrived singly

from every quarter, sailed and swooped in slow, great circles round and round the valley and house where our dead lay. The fanning of their horrible wings could be heard coming ever nearer and nearer, verifying the words of Scripture, "the vultures hasted to the prey"; "where the slain are, there are they;" nor did they leave us till, late in the day, a small and melancholy train, bearing the coffin, slowly ascended the steep winding paths, and dear —— was laid in his quiet grave on Craigton hillside, charitably and kindly ministered to by the good archdeacon, himself a terrible sufferer by yellow-fever. A more lovely spot than where he lies, lamented and beloved, could never be seen—at the top of a mountain-crown, the beautiful little church (now newly restored after being destroyed in a hurricane) at his head, the whole green fertile valley at his feet, all breathing of peace and quiet till the day of resurrection.

Our melancholy faces and enfeebled condition warned us that, if anything like health was ever again to be enjoyed, a move must be made. Gardens House was therefore taken for us, and early on the morning of the fourth day after the funeral, a sad and melancholy cavalcade walked and rode down to the gardens, across the river, and up the mountain on the other side, till our new home was reached. Something like a gleam of hope visited our cheerless spirits, as we walked through the clean, empty rooms, faithfully built a hundred years gone by. This house promised at least shelter, coolness, and change of scene; besides, if we could hope to sleep in a bed that night we must bestir ourselves. It was past five before the last of a long train of leisurely bearers sauntered into the house with our belongings from Claremont on their heads. By eight we had, one and all, drawn in a close circle round a blazing log-fire, pitifully attempting to cheer each other by story-telling. Many a long year must have passed since a fire had been kindled in that fine old room, and the children were kept amused by the chase and slaughter of a horde of red ants, about half an inch long, which were brought out of the old wood by the heat of the fire. With what a feeling of deep thankfulness we laid down that night I can never forget, but in anxious and silent dread I looked into the faces of those around me each passing hour, lest I should see the first symptoms of that dreaded fever, thankful beyond measure, as time slowly ebbed away—how

slowly!—to see the first rays of returning health coming back to us.

A peaceful month with no new anxieties gave us reason to hope that this wave of sickness had spent itself, when one of the children was brought to death's door with typhoid-fever. In the midst of this distress our hearts were stirred anew by the death of two dear friends, a brother and sister, who perished at Bermuda Mount, of yellow-fever, dying within twenty minutes of each other. Ill and weak with nursing our sick child, it was a terrible shock to be awakened at three in the morning, when a mounted messenger from Bermuda Mount, sent to give us the dreadful news, knocked up the household. Without a word of warning or preparation, our coloured nurse stole into my room, where she stood whispering in an awe-struck tone: "All the two of dem is dead!"

Vigorous, youthful, full of high spirit and courage, beloved of all, it was pitiful to lose them, and they could ill be spared; but they perished, and two more graves were dug on Craighton hillside. Many of our friends died in the plains at this time, proving that yellow-fever is no respecter of places, and is as often to be seen in the sweet, breezy, isolated hilltops as in the sweltering streets of Kingston—the poison is in the air.

Gardens House, or, as it was commonly known among the country people, "Gardens Great House," is solidly placed on a bit of table-land at the junction of the two great mountain highways into the interior—the Guava Ridge and Flampstead roads, at an altitude of thirteen hundred feet above the level of the sea, built in the middle of what had formerly been the Botanical Gardens, till growing impecuniosity did away with so useful an institution. This fact accounted for the variety and beauty of the shrubs and trees surrounding the grey-stone house. This one had been erected in the slave-owning days, when labour cost nothing; its walls, always deliciously cool, were three feet thick, sheltered by an extremely high-pitched grey shingle roof, off which the rays of the sun glanced. Great wide enclosed verandahs in front commanded a lovely view across the valley, and down to Gordon Town, with occasional glimpses of the river hurrying away to the sea.

A large square of short emerald turf of exceedingly fine close texture, about the size of a tennis-ground, and beautifully even, spread before the front door, enclosed

on all four sides by the house, kitchens, servants' quarters, coach-house, and a large swimming-bath, supplied, as was all our water, by an aqueduct, from the upper waters of the Hope. Shut in by a stout gate, we looked able to stand a siege.

Returning health and spirits, after a time, caused a resumption of the active habits which had been so sadly put an end to by our troubles. Morning and evening one of the children, in turn, would scamper about on their extremely self-willed little pony, whose determination I never saw equalled. It was always maintained that Tommy took them out for a ride, and brought them back when it suited himself, not his rider. "Rouse up there, rouse up! show a leg, show a leg in a purser's stocking!" was a well-known cry about six a.m., which, being interpreted, meant that we were requested to get up. No ablutions were permissible at this time, but, having partaken of coffee and biscuits, as many as could be got together started on our ramble. In the morning, when the sun is well behind the frowning, overhanging mountain, Guava Ridge road was chosen, in the afternoon exactly the reverse; Flampstead road, Dublin Castle, and Dublin Castle Great House being the usual route. By a little management of this sort, no sun ever inconvenienced us. Vegetation on each side of the precipitous zig-zag paths was a perpetual pleasure. Gold and silver fern lined one reach; maidenhair spleenwort, with black shiny stalks as thick as a lady's riding-whip, almost filled a little dell adjoining; while feathery lace-plant and lycopodium moss formed a carpet among the rare ferns, unequalled in the finest conservatory. Great clumps of bamboos, the most graceful of all green things in Jamaica, fenced in one very dangerous turn, where the path was only about two feet wide, a wall of mountain on one side, a sheer precipice, seven or eight hundred feet down, the other. We always fled past this place for fear a pack-mule, laden with bulging bags of coffee, should encounter us, in which case we should certainly have been pushed down the ravine. They are, in these narrow paths, obstinate "as a mule," and refuse to budge an inch; they are also extremely cute, and have frequently been known to rub their heavy burthens against a sharp rock until a hole is torn in the bag, and the coffee-berries run out, having learned by former experience that such a process lightens their load; but as it also destroys the balance, wary old beasts have been known

to rub a hole in each side, and to arrive at their destination, walking ten or a dozen in single file, with, perhaps, one black boy in charge, mounted on the first mule in the string, without a coffee-berry remaining!

The wonderful growth of bamboo always put me in mind of Jonah's gourd. One morning a great, fat, greenish-grey shoot, exactly like giant asparagus, would appear, just breaking through the friable reddish earth; next day it was twelve inches high, the day after over two feet; one could really see it grow, till a fine feathery wand, tender and drooping, shot up into the sky, strengthening with age. A coffee plantation in early morning, before the sun has kissed away the heavy night dews, is a beautiful sight; each plant laden with white, wax-like, star flowers, emitting a faint scent, something between orange-blossom and stephanotis, and making up an overpowering aggregate of sweetness. The steeper the ground the better the coffee; the best in the island grows at Clifton Mount above Newcastle, at an altitude of four to five thousand feet, clinging in a precarious way to the nearly unattainable heights above. Pendent from the forked branches of cotton-trees magnificent rose-coloured orchids flaunt and wave over the paths in cheerful mockery, suspended by a single hair, far above your head, as if saying: "Don't you wish you may get me?" I have no doubt, like the fox and the grapes, that we were better without them, lovely as they were, for their smell—I cannot say scent—closely resembles that of dead rats. Begonia grows by the wayside to an extraordinary height, twelve or fourteen feet; it seemed, like the furze at home, never out of bloom, the plants being always covered with an endless succession of deep-pink fleshy flowers.

There are no venomous snakes in Jamaica, while in Cuba, only about seventy miles off, cobras, rattlesnakes, deadly spiders, and reptiles abound. Extreme care is taken, by order of the Government of Jamaica, when importing timber and other likely merchandise from Havanna to prevent the introduction of snakes into the island, and hitherto with success. I plunged into the gullies and bush fearlessly in the pursuit of some precious fern, knowing this. Scorpions, however, drop on your head from the rafters of old buildings and the trunks of decayed trees, and wriggle into an unused key-hole, even in this favoured

island. The "trap-door spider" is not uncommon either; its bite when provoked is considered highly dangerous, if not fatal, and the way it retires hastily within its clay-built nest, and slams the door behind, as if in dudgeon, is very curious. The children bought some from a native when staying at Craighton with the governor, and, carefully nursing the little round brown nests with a live spider in each, brought them to me in my bedroom to keep safely for them until our return home.

The cultivation of anything in the mountains is carried on with great difficulty; to climb even an ordinary yam-patch requires the agility of a squirrel and the endurance of a mule, as the ground is hardly less steep than the side of a wall. These perpetual ups and downs are most fatiguing. Small tenements abounded everywhere; a man squatted down apparently on the mountain just where he fancied, ran up a little wattle and daub hut, which was speedily occupied by a collection of relations, friends, god-mothers, and babies, numbering from six to a dozen, and proceeded to cultivate yams, meallies, and guinea-grass, without let or hindrance.

God-mothers are in Jamaica a very great power. Far from considering, in the usual English way, that her responsibilities cease with the presentation of a cup, fork, and spoon, she is expected to "take to" and provide for her god-child till it is grown up, often removing it entirely from the family circle to that of her own. This curious custom is commoner in Port Royal than elsewhere, and is principally the result of fathers being a scarcer article there than in other parts.

A shadowy owner far away in England sometimes cropped up, actually laying claim to his own lands, but he certainly got no rent if it was a "thrown up" property, and he was afraid to take steps to enforce his rights, owing in most cases to the long years his own Government taxes had remained unpaid. The long columns of "Owners wanted," advertised for year by year in the Jamaica Gazette, give some idea of the enormous number of "thrown up" properties lying untended and unprofitable owing to the poverty of their once thriving proprietors. Planted with bananas and cocoa-nuts, crops that require so little tending, and for which an excellent market in the United States is always to be obtained, much might be done even

now. Bananas picked in enormous bunches, each bunch as much as a man can carry, and quite green, ripen on the seven days' voyage, and are in the finest condition on arriving at New York, where they often fetch a shilling apiece. The plant must, however, have water, and thrives best in damp places.

ONE DINNER A WEEK.

As my years, alas! are more than are contained in half a century, I presume I am considered to be in my second childhood when I find myself invited to attend a children's party. I generally struggle to accept these invitations, although I well may feel suspicious of their covering a smile at my protracted juvenility. Still, I am partial to small people, and never like to miss an opportunity of meeting them, and of learning something new about society in general, which I usually find they are able to impart to me. But for the knowledge thus acquired, I should never have discovered that Jones, whom I esteemed as the most pompous of old prigs, was so excellent a help in making a dirt pudding, or that Brown, whom I regarded as the prosiest of bores, had so fanciful a talent for the telling of a fairy-tale. Tomkins, too, I thought a rather shallow fellow, till I learned quite accidentally how profound was his knowledge of the anatomy of dolls, and how perfect was his skill in setting fractured (wooden) legs, and mending broken (waxen) noses; while I must candidly confess that my esteem for my friend Robinson has enormously increased since I have discovered how renowned he is for saddling a cockhorse, and how he distances all rivals in the art of making toffee.

Having thus a taste for juvenile festivities, I accepted with great pleasure a recent invitation by Mr. Walter Austin, of the London Cottage Mission, to come to one of his small weekly children's dinner-parties. Small, that is, in reference to the stature of the guests, but hardly to be called so in considering their numbers. The average attendance is upwards of five hundred, and, when funds enough are furnished by the charitable public, the pot is kept a boiling for as many as a thousand. "Small and early" is the rule of these little social gatherings, and though the hour named is noon, the guests are not so fashionable that they needs must be unpunctual. "First come, first served," is a motto fair to

all, and one easily remembered by small boys with large appetites. So the cooks who are employed at 67, Salmon Lane, in the neighbourhood of Stepney, have no cause for complaint that their cookery is spoiled by waiting for late comers.

Salmon Lane has certainly an appetising sound, and seems not inappropriate as a place to give a dinner. On coming from a pantomime, one might expect, perhaps, to find it close to Cod's Head Court, and not far from Turtle Alley, or possibly Fried Sole Street. As I walked along the lane, which is somewhat of a long one, although it has no turning, I felt a trifle disappointed at not meeting some old friends, such as Mr. Chalks the milkman, and Mrs. Suds the laundress, with whom my pantomime experience had long made me familiar. I confess I should have liked to see upon the shop-fronts such well-remembered names as, "Butcher, Mr. Shortweight," or "Baker, Mr. Crusty," and I should have further found reason for rejoicing had I come across a chimney-sweep wheeling a perambulator, such as in the festive season I have seen upon the stage, or possibly a policeman being wheeled off in a wheelbarrow in the middle of a pelting shower of cabbages and carrots. Or if this delight was not to be, I might still have been content if I had but seen a row of water-rate collectors sitting in the stocks, or a kitchen-stuff supply-store, with the sign of the Hot Poker.

But the reality was not of this dramatic character. Salmon Lane, indeed, is a most prosaic thoroughfare, and when seen upon a foggy day, shows little to remind one of the glamour of the footlights. Its small houses are all of the most ordinary square-box, plain, back-slummy order of architecture. Miles of similar dull, dreary, dismal, dirty little tenements surround it on all sides, and the eye of the æsthetic may look vainly for relief from the sad, wearisome monotony. To one who had been trudging through the slushy little streets, and courts, and alleys in the neighbourhood, the sight of the New Cottage Mission Hall, with its cheerful white brick frontage, and clean and well-kept aspect, was pleasant to the eye; and the mind rejoiced at the prospect of the promised transformation-scene, wherein the good fairy Benevolence would defeat the demon Hunger, who would be banished from the blissful realms of steaming Irish Stew!

The dining-room, or rather let me say

the banquet-hall, wherein on every Wednesday, from November until May, this happy "change" takes place, which transforms a crowd of wretched, hungry little children into a cheerful-looking, happy little company, is supplied with fourteen tables, at each of which is fully room for seating fourteen of the guests. Fifteen, or even sixteen, sometimes manage to find room, for a child of four or five, especially when half-starved, can be put in a small space. So the banquet-hall accommodates above two hundred guests, and when these have all been feasted they go chattering away, and the next two hundred hungry ones fill the vacant seats. In accordance with a rule which is printed in clear type upon the cards of invitation, or, to speak less politely, upon the tickets for soup, each guest comes provided with a plate—or more commonly a basin, as being more convenient for holding a big helping—and likewise with a spoon, of very varying dimensions, and in few cases proportionate to the mouth it has to feed. Many of the bigger children had, I noticed, nothing better than a battered teaspoon, while one remarkably small guest, who might have sat for Tiny Tim, had the forethought to be furnished with a weapon so prodigious, that he seemed prepared for supper with that illustrious host, in connection with whom there is a proverb about a long spoon.

On the morning of my visit the hall was three times filled, and the order of procedure was the same in every case. First entered the guests, marching in quick time to music of their own making, a chattering chorus in the minor, with brisk pedal accompaniment. Attendants quickly followed, bearing two enormous tin tureens of Irish stew, one to each end of the room. Then a whistle sounded shrilly, and silence was proclaimed, and to the tune of the Old Hundredth the children rose and sang a short and simple grace, whereof the final line bore reference to "feasting in Paradise," which must seem a heavenly pleasure to a hungry little child.

Young singers, as a rule, are apt to drag the time, but I am bound to say the fault was here by no means to be found. Indeed, a critic might have fancied that the grace towards its close was just a trifle hurried, and certainly the "Amen" was sung with an alacrity which showed no sign of dragging. Very possibly, however, this was due, not quite so much to the musical instruction which the singers had received,

as to the toothsome and delightful savour of the stew. This with a delicious fragrance floated in the air, and set the mouth watering with pleasant expectation, so that it was small wonder that the time was never dragged.

Then there arose a hungry clamour, which was speedily subdued, for when once the little tongues had tasted of the stew, they ceased with one consent to waste their energy in prattling. And although I saw no sign of unfair striving of the stronger to get helped before the weakly, there was certainly a great outstretching of the arms and uprising of the hands, which, but for the fact of their holding plates and basins, might have called to mind the Crowd Scene in the German Julius Caesar. Hands and arms, however, had soon other work to do, for plates and basins were filled speedily, and handed to their owners. Unlike most public dinners, there was no cause to complain here of the sluggishness of waiters. Miss Napton, the kind lady who presides over the feasts, and the young ladies who come every Wednesday to help her, are, by constant practice, deft and active with their work, and give general satisfaction to the host and to the guests. If in her capacity of waitress any of them wished to apply for a new place, there would be no question of her getting a good character. One of these lady helps, if I may venture so to call them, is a lady by her title as well as by her courtesy and gentle birth and bearing. All gratitude and honour be to lady helps like these, who never stint their service to help forward a good work. And it is surely a good work to bring to the East End the gracious manners of the West, and lend a kindly hand to bridge the social chasms which are said by some to yawn between the rich and the poor, but which are not so deep but that good nature can soon fathom them with the helping of good sense.

But let us return to our mutton, or, rather, to our Irish stew, whereof, according to the cookery-books, mutton ought to be the meat. But of the stew in Salmon Lane the principal ingredient is that "giant-like ox-beef" which has played such havoc with the house of Fairy Mustard-seed. Beef is here preferred, as being, perhaps, stronger in its potency to nourish and give power to small elbows and plumpness to pinched cheeks. Good, savoury, substantial, wholesome, toothsome, and nutritious, I certainly can certify I found

this children's food ; a mess sufficing both for meat and drink, of beef, and rice, and vegetables, well-blended and well-boiled, with nothing tough or stringy to harass mastication, and with a dash of curry-powder to help it to digest. Since six the previous morning the cauldron had been simmering, and the cooks hard at their work, and the result was really quite a triumph of their industry and art.

"Mak' yourself at whoam, sir, an' tak' girt mouthfuls !" said a cheery farmer to me, when, after walking through his turnips, I found sufficient appetite to join him in his onslaught on a half-boiled leg of pork. I called to mind his kind advice as I looked along the tables, and saw the wistful eyes that watched the helping of the meat. I thought that if "girt mouthfuls" were the rule with these small feeders, the chances of a choking fit could hardly be remote. But to take great mouthfuls is not easy with a teaspoon, and this in very many cases was the implement employed. My notions of self-help, especially at dinner, might astonish Dr. Smiles, but if I were very hungry, and were allowed to help myself to Irish stew, I should not select a teaspoon as my weapon for the occasion.

The picture of little Oliver asking for more, and thereby astounding the awful Mr. Bumble, could never find a parallel at these poor little children's dinner-parties. There is nothing of the Bumble about good Mr. Austin, and any little hungry, half-starved Olivers, or Olivias, or Jims, or Jacks, or Jills, may have their plates refilled as often as they please. Miss Jill may eat her fill, with no scruple and no stint, and Master Jack may peg away until he is "serenely full," like the salad-eating epicure described by Sydney Smith, and has the pleasant sensation, immortalised by Leech, of feeling as though his jacket were buttoned. This, with most of the Jacks present on the morning of my visit, would have been a new sensation, and one difficult to realise, for buttons seemed a luxury whereof not many could boast. A pin or piece of string was mostly used by way of substitute, though at the throat of one young masher sparkled such metallic lustre that I fancied he wore studs. But on a closer view I found that the brilliant was a bit of wire, which probably had once adorned a soda-water bottle. This served to keep his coat, which was three sizes too big for him, from falling off his shoulders, and making known the fact that

there was nothing under it to cover his bare skin.

It may be guessed from the last paragraph that, as concerns their dinner costume, Mr. Austin is by no means too exacting with his guests. White chokers and dress-coats are far from being necessary, and it is not esteemed essential that all trousers should be black. The nearest approach that I could find to a dress-coat was a garment which had been denuded of its tails and shortened for a jacket. Of ties there were none, neither white, nor black, nor grey, though in some cases their place was supplied by a thin, threadbare strip of shoddy worsted, called, in mockery, a "comforter," which dangled to the waist, and if it afforded little comfort to the wearer, it appeared to be of service as a napkin and a handkerchief. Masher cuffs and cut-throat collars were conspicuous by their absence, and only in one instance was a shirt-front to be seen, and this was simply from the fact that the young swell who displayed it wore neither coat nor vest.

The girls were just a shade less shabby than the boys ; for a shawl, though thin, may cover a multitude of sins in the raiment underneath it, and a bit of faded ribbon or a fragment of a feather may serve to give some colour to a sorely battered bonnet or a sadly frayed-out dress. One pretty child I noticed who seemed better clad than most, and looked quite a little lady as she sat at table, the scarlet poppies in her hat adding colour to the paler roses on her cheek. But, alas ! the hat was only lent for the occasion, and when she left her seat to tell me her sad tale—how she had had no meat since Wednesday, and scarce enough bread since, and there were three children at home, and no father to feed them, and mother out of work—as she stood to tell me this, I called to mind the saying about "desinit in piscem" which I had learned at school, for although "formosa superne" with the poppies in her hat, the poor little woman boasted the fishiest of boots.

Other cases I could cite of singularity in costume, which might have appeared humorous if they had not been so pathetic. Perhaps the funniest of all, and also possibly the saddest, were a couple of small people who toddled in together, and when seated seemed inseparable, like the famous Siam twins. The cause of this close union was, I found, an oilskin table-

cloth, which, as the day was wet and stormy, had been lent them for a cloak.

I hope that no reader will fancy from the manner of my writing that I have any thought of making silly, ill-timed fun of these poor hungry little folks, or of amusing myself by raising a coarse laugh at their expense. God help them! I would sooner throw my pen into the fire and never write another word that should appear in print. I am not a man of sentiment, or much inclined to snivel at the sight of a dead donkey or a babe crying for the moon. But, albeit unused to the melting mood, my eyes were somewhat moistened by looking at these little ones, and as I talked with them and cheered them as well as I was able, if I had not done my best to laugh—not at them, mind, but with them—I think I must have cried. A child without a plaything is a pitiable being, and here were children by the dozen not merely without playthings, but without the hope of play. Most of them had to work, and to work hard for a living, and probably not one in ten had ever learned to play. One urchin told me, with some pride, that he could weekly add some six or seven shillings to the family support by working every day about ten hours at a stretch. To fix the bristles in a scrub-brush is a slow way to grow rich, for you only gain a penny if you fill two hundred holes, and you will soon find that your fingers suffer from the work. Nor is making match-boxes a lucrative employment when you are paid a shilling a gross for them, providing your own paste. These were two out of a score of handicrafts, described to me, which just save from starvation many children in the East. Poor little ill-paid toilers! I might have well been moved to tears as I listened to their sad tales and looked at their pale cheeks. But I liked better to see them brighten with the sunshine of a smile, and so I tried to cheer them and not grieve at their sad plight.

As to the good done by these dinners there can be little doubt. They would be well worth the giving, were it only for the fact of their affording to the guests one bright half-hour of happiness to think of and look forward to through all the dull, dark week. But their physical well-doing is far more deeply felt. One good dinner a week may save a child from starving, and be the means, if it be sickly, of helping it to health. That the parents in the neighbourhood, as well as the poor children,

quite appreciate the value of the stew of Salmon Lane is well proved by the many applications which are made for leave to come and eat of it. Here is just one specimen, picked at random from a heap, and copied literatim. There can be surely no mistake about the force of the appeal, although the writer might perhaps have improved the spelling somewhat had he conceived the notion that it would be seen in print:

"Gentelman i should feel Abligh to you if you would give me a free tickets has my Wife has gorn to the Infirney at Bromly and Left me With 5 Children has i ham out of Work and no wan to support them I should feall gratley Abligh John McIntier 31 Brenton st."

In reply to sundry questions touching management and maintenance, Mr. Austin kindly gave me an account of his stewardship, that is, his Irish stew-ardship. He first started on his mission—to help the East End poor—more than a dozen years ago; but the first of his small dinners was given on the first Wednesday in 1879, which, it chanced, was New Year's Day. Since then he has issued his invitations weekly, except on one occasion, throughout the winter months and far into the spring. The one sad exception happened in the January of last year. On this terrible Black Wednesday, the poor little folk who came to feast as usual were sent empty away. Due notice had been given that through lack of funds that day no dinner could be had; but the guests came notwithstanding, for hunger often leads to hoping against hope, and it was a hard task to persuade them of the melancholy truth.

Considering its excellence, the expense of the banquet can be hardly thought extravagant; for the dinner-bill is barely more than fourpence-farthing for each one of the guests. So that, in fact, to save a child from starving, and give him a good feed, scarce exceeds the cost of swallowing an oyster, as the market price now rules. Perhaps the sybarite who sucks down half-a-score by way of prelude to his dinner may, in some visit of the nightmare after extra heavy feasting, be haunted by the ghosts of those half-dozen hungry children whom his oysters might have fed. As penance for his gluttony, he may enjoy the novel luxury of doing a good deed, by sending Mr. Austin a donation for his dinners; and, by way of wholesome exercise, he may try a course of East

End district-visiting, which he will find vastly different to the visiting in the West.

To support the Cottage Mission, the dinner-bills included, Mr. Austin receives yearly about seventeen hundred pounds. Gifts from voluntary donors are all he has to help him; and the more money they give the more food will be given, the more visits be paid, and the more good will be done. The expenses of the management are most carefully restricted to the lowest point consistent with the work being well-done. Funds are not wasted on fine buildings, or on ornamental gentlemen, who receive a princely salary for doing poorish work. Any one who sends a sovereign to be spent upon the stew, may be sure he will thereby be filling fifty little mouths, and that fifty little bodies will be gladdened by his gift. And there is no fear of the benefit being ill-bestowed. The district-visitors who help the kindly host in his good work will scruple not to penetrate the slummiest of the slums, and will invite to dinner only those in direst need.

The Cottage Mission work, as carried on by Mr. Austin, is completely unsectarian, and by neither church nor chapel can a fair reason be assigned for holding aloof from its support. When he meets with a sad case of spiritual destitution—and such cases are just now not uncommon in the East—it is by simple Gospel teaching that he strives for its relief; and when, as on these winter Wednesdays, he does his best to succour cases of bodily distress, a hungry little child need learn no "Open Sesame" in order to gain entrance to his hospitable hall. That he is doing a good work I am most thoroughly persuaded, or I certainly should never send this paper to the press. They who may be moved by it to help him in his mission need merely sign their names at the bottom of a cheque, and post it to his office, at Number Forty-four in Finsbury Pavement, where their autographs will be most thankfully received.

CHRONICLES OF ENGLISH COUNTIES.

STAFFORDSHIRE. PART II.

It would hardly do to leave Lichfield without further allusion to its cathedral and its bishopric, seeing that the town owes all its importance to these. And in the hands of a writer of an ecclesiological turn what an exciting history could be made of the early origin of the eccle-

siastical settlement, a sort of missionary church among the heathen Mercians, and a centre of Northumbrian influence; of its rise to the dignity of a metropolitan see when Offa the Conqueror and dyke-builder, thinking it not worthy of him that a foreign prelate like him of Canterbury should have authority in his kingdom, obtained that privilege from the Pope; of the speedy decline of Lichfield from that dignity, and of how presently, after the Conquest, the bishop's seat was moved away to Chester and thence to Coventry, but was brought back after long years to Lichfield once more. The cathedral in part dates from this home-coming of the bishop, when Roger de Clinton the new bishop, in 1129, began the rebuilding of it upon the site of the former minster; but the exterior is of later and richer style. The building has suffered—much more than any of its fellows—from the damage it sustained during the civil wars, but, however, was speedily repaired under the first energetic and constructive bishop of the Restoration. As much, perhaps, it suffered from the neglect of subsequent times, when dean and canons removed the old statues of kings and saints to adorn the summer-houses of their pleasant gardens. However, all has now been restored, and in its symmetry and high finish, the cathedral suggests an elaborate shrine, rather the work of the silversmith than the mason.

Our indignation against the neglectful dignitaries of a past age must be tempered with the reflection that many of these careless Gallios were themselves amiable and worthy men. There was a time when the cathedral close of Lichfield was the centre of a literary society, of a very pleasant and genial kind—when Miss Seward was in residence, that is, and the old cathedral city was brightened by the presence of her two charming and sprightly wards, Honoria and Elizabeth Sneyd. Among these moved the graceful military figure of André, whose sad subsequent fate it was to be hung as a spy by order of General Washington in the American revolutionary war. Honoria was the choice of the gallant soldier, while both the sisters were beloved by the egotistic philanthropist, the awkward Thomas Day, author of Sandford and Merton. Day brought Sabrina with him to Lichfield, the girl whom he was educating to be his wife; but his schemes for elevating the female character in her person vanished into air in the presence

of the charming, high-spirited girls of the cathedral close. Honoria's heart was already occupied, and Day turned to the younger sister, who was brought to own that she had no greater repugnance to Mr. Day than might be attributed to his awkwardness and want of every polite accomplishment. Upon the word Day started off for France to acquire the graces of a *petit-maitre*—where was the respectable Barlow then? He had masters regardless of cost, he danced, he fenced with quite savage determination, while his leisure moments he spent in irons, to correct an unfortunate inward curvature about the knees. When his education was completed, he came back to Lichfield with all a lover's ardour, to claim his reward. But, alas! the fair Elizabeth regarded her transformed lover only with wonder and dismay as he stood before her in his newly-studied posture, arrayed in the latest fashion of Paris. With a shudder she is said to have declared that she greatly preferred Thomas Day, blackguard, to Thomas Day, gentleman, and the poor man was led away by his sympathising friends, no more to appear in the little world of Lichfield.

The fate of the two charming girls does not strike us as in any way enviable. Each of them married in turn the friend of Day, Lovel Edgeworth, the widower, already the father of the afterwards celebrated Maria, a man remarkable in his influence over women, a sort of engrossing, absorbing quality, as if he had been a devourer of virgins, and had flourished greatly upon it, but anyhow a much-marrying man, who, when the two Sneyds were dead, went on to marry somebody else. However, this has nothing to do with the little coterie of Lichfield, which came to an end with Miss Seward, whose letters were of sufficient literary value to find an editor in Sir Walter Scott.

Before leaving this corner of the county we must pay a flying visit to Tamworth, once a border-fortress of the Mercian earls against their stirring and aggressive neighbours of the Danelagh, and before that time a chief seat of the Mercian kings. "A rise of ground," writes J. R. Green in his *Conquest of England*—"a rise of ground—now known as the Castle Hill—breaks the swampy levels at the junction of the Anker with the Tame, and a vill of the Mercian kings had been established here at an early time, which with the little 'worth' that grew up about it commanded what was then the only practicable passage over either river to the plains of the Trent.

On this rise *Æthelfloed*"—the daughter of Alfred, the same lady whom we have seen raising Chester from its ruins—"threw up a huge mound, crowned with a fortress, portions of whose brickwork may still be seen as one zigzags up the steep ascent." On this mount at a later date the Marmions raised their feudal tower, the ruins of which give an air of dignity to the thriving little modern town.

To most of us Tamworth recalls more especially the memory of the late statesman, Sir Robert Peel, the origin of whose family we have already traced in Lancashire; and Drayton Manor close by, a fine Tudor mansion by Smirke, recalls the later glories of the house. The intermediate link, however, between Lancashire and Drayton Manor is to be sought at Burton-on-Trent, of which a local historian of the early part of this century writes: "Its affluent streams supply several large cotton works belonging to Mr. Peele." Indeed, the evidences of manufacturing industry around may remind us that we are still on the edge of that wide, wild district of moor and hill and stream, whose inhabitants have set going the great manufacturing industries about them in Yorkshire, in Lancashire, in Derbyshire, in Cheshire, and in these outlying districts. Perhaps we may even try to identify this industrious race with the *Cornabii* who furnished many recruits to the Roman legions, and whom the Welsh describe as the *Coraniaid*, one of the three invading tribes who came into the Isle of Britain, and never departed from it; a race certainly not Celtic, although settled in England before the Roman invasion, and of which, perhaps, is still preserved a faint trace of local habitation in the district of Craven in Yorkshire.

At Burton-on-Trent we are reminded of the ancient fame of the Staffordshire ales, but there is nothing else about the town to recall its past history. The town, probably, was not in existence when a holy woman, Modwena of the Celtic Church, founded a little colony of nuns on an island enclosed by two branches of the river, which became known as Modwenstow, after the holy woman, or sometimes as Andresey, or Andrew's Isle, from the saint to whom the little church on the island was dedicated. Later on an abbey was built by a Saxon Earl of Mercia, of which some faint traces are still to be found. But the most ancient monument in Burton is the old bridge, with its thirty-six arches, as old as the Conquest, a

bridge that has heard the clash of arms and the noise of the fray. It was in the reign of the fainéant Edward the Second that the barons rose against the De Spensers, and were joined by the king's cousin, Thomas, Earl of Lancaster. But the earl being abandoned by most of his friends, was not in a condition to make head against the king, "which made him resolve to withdraw to the north, and join the Scots, who had promised him assistance. The king pursued him, and as the earl, to avoid a battle with him, endeavoured to force the passage of a bridge"—this, our Burton bridge, which was kept by Sir Andrew Harclay, the constable of Carlisle—"he was made prisoner, and carried to Pontefract, where the king took off his head." Once upon a time an ancient chapel stood on one of the arches of the bridge, and all who passed by implored the intercession of holy St. Thomas of Lancaster, who fell thereabouts. But the chapel has long since disappeared.

Not far below Burton the Trent is joined by the beautiful river Dove, which forms the boundary between the counties of Stafford and Derby, while romantic Dovedale, beloved alike of artist and fisherman, is shared by either county. Just in the gate of Dovedale lies Tutbury, that strong and famous castle of the Earls of Lancaster, which may suggest to the historian that the Earl of Lancaster, in trying to force the bridge of Burton, had not so much the distant Scots in his eye as his own strong castle, which lay so snugly and conveniently near, but whose walls he was destined never again to see. The castle, forfeited to the crown, was in the next reign granted to the noted John of Gaunt, and in his days we come across customs and practices that are not a little puzzling to the antiquarian. Tutbury, it seems, was the mustering-place of the minstrels from all the country round, and here they met once a year, and crowned or chaired one of their number, who presided over the festivities of the day. In all this we see rather Celtic than English customs, for, in truth, minstrels and bards have never held such high place among the unimaginative Saxon as to justify these solemnities. But then we have already made the acquaintance, at Chester Fair, of a hybrid race of minstrels, the same who are said to have rescued Earl Ranulph from the Welsh, and who afterwards sang his praises along with Robin Hood. Now we do not hear of

Earl Ranulph at Tutbury, which, indeed, belonged to the De Ferriers before it came to the Earls of Lancaster, but the influence of the powerful Earls of Chester had extended all over the district, as shown in the abbeys and priories founded by this Ranulph the "Good"—good to the monks, that is—an influence whose extent is shown in the following little Staffordshire legend.

Earl Ranulph, on his way to the Crusades, or, perhaps, back from them, being on board a ship, fell into a great storm, so that all the people about the earl, fearing instant shipwreck, besought him, as having most influence in the Court of Heaven, to pray for a good deliverance. But the earl said nay; let them wait till midnight, and then, if the storm were not stayed, he would pray. Midnight came, and the storm was still raging, and the people went to the earl, and besought him once more. "Not so," said the earl, "for it is now midnight, and at this hour in England thousands of monks are rising from their beds to pray for me at their shrines and altars, so wherefore should I pray?" The earl's reliance on the force of other people's prayers was justified by the event; the storm was presently stilled, and the ship came safe to port.

That monks and minstrels increased and abounded everywhere under Earl Ranulph's sway is sufficiently evident, and perhaps in this we have the origin of the minstrels' gathering at Tutbury—a motley crew, no doubt, Norman jongleur, and Welsh harpist, and Saxon gleeman, retaining, half in mockery, some of the more solemn rites of the Welsh bardic fraternity. On the day of their assembly, it is said by the old chronicler, a bull was turned out among them by the lord of Tutbury—a bull carefully shaved and greased—and if the minstrels could grasp him and hold him before he crossed the river, the animal became their own, to be first baited and then feasted upon. Now, this degrading and cruel custom is not of the soil at all. It bears the mark of John of Gaunt, and he probably brought the notion home with him from Spain—he who was hardly an English prince, but something between a Fleming and a Castilian. The bull-sport survived for many centuries, and became eventually a tough contest between the men of Stafford and of the adjoining county of Derby, but was discontinued at last, as it had become a regular faction-fight.

Another whimsical custom, which, perhaps, had the same foreign origin, is connected with Wichnor-on-the-Trent, a manor dependent on Tutbury, which, according to the original charter from the Earl of Lancaster, is granted on condition that the lord shall provide one bacon flyke for any married pair who may present themselves, upon the husband making the following declaration :

"Here ye Lord of Whichenour mayntayner and giver of this baconne that I Asyth I wedded B my wife and syth I had her in my keepyng and at wylle by a yere and a day after our marryage, I would not have changed for none other farer ne fowler richer ne powrer, ne for none other descended of gretter lynage slepyng ne waking at noe time and if the seid B were sole and I sole I wolde take her to be my wife before all the wymen of the world and of what condytions soever they be good or evil."

Any man of religion may also come a year after his profession, and claim the bacon if he can truly declare that he has never repented of his vows. Some account of the bacon-flitch will be found in the earlier Spectators, and the wits of the day pretended that only three couples had ventured to claim the bacon since the foundation of the prize; one of these being a sea-captain and his wife, who had parted at the church-door, and never met again till they met to claim the flitch. Another pair seemed to fulfil all conditions, but quarrelled so fiercely as to how the bacon should be cooked that they were adjudged to return it; while the third couple comprised a good-natured simpleton and his dumb wife. These old jokes and stories are also told, no doubt, in connection with the similar custom at Dunmow in Essex, which was revived within the memory of man by the late Harrison Ainsworth.

About Tutbury lies the ancient forest of Needwood, of which some fine old oaks still remain scattered here and there, while farther up the River Dove, but at some distance from its banks, lies Uttoxeter. It was in Uttoxeter market-place that Dr. Johnson performed his well-known penance, standing bareheaded in the rain before the stall where once his father had been used to sell his books on market-day. Fifty years before, young Samuel had been ordered by his father to take his place in attending the market, and Samuel had refused, and, in later years, this was the doctor's expiation for his youthful fault. When Nathaniel

Hawthorne, some years ago, was visiting the literary shrines of England, he noticed on the base of Dr. Johnson's statue in Lichfield market-place a bas-relief of the scene of penance, and forthwith made a pilgrimage to Uttoxeter to see the place. But, being detained for some hours waiting for a train, he complained that his penance was heavier than the doctor's; which is hardly an encouragement to anyone to visit the dull little town. Uttoxeter, however, has also memories of Mary Howitt, the daughter of a respectable Quaker pair named Botham. On her mother's side she was a descendant of Wood, of Irish halfpenny fame. Mrs. Howitt's perhaps forgotten novel of Wood Leighton is thought to contain descriptive sketches of Uttoxeter and its society of those days; and she was long remembered in the place as the girl whose delight it was to wander about fields and bring home quantities of wild flowers.

Following the little river Tean, which joins the Dove near Uttoxeter, we come to Cheadle, with its ancient manufacture of tapes, which seems originally to have been introduced from Holland, or perhaps by the Walloons, who were driven to England by the persecution of the Grand Monarque. On the more important feeder of the Dove, the River Churnet, lies Alton with its Towers, the magnificent seat of the Talbôts, as famous locally as Chatsworth, and a great centre for excursions from the manufacturing towns to the northwards. An old tower of the De Verdons crowns a rock three hundred feet high, rising from the bed of the river.

We are now fairly among the moorlands, and on our way to Leek, the capital of the Staffordshire moorland district, a very ancient town with a history of its own, and happily not without an historian, for Sleigh's history of Leek is one of the fullest and most elaborate of local histories.

The wild and lonely moorlands about Leek abound with wild traditions and superstitions. The headless horseman dashes over stock and stone, and snatches up any unfortunate wight who may chance to come belated in his way; when after a wild chase over hill and dale, the victim is left almost lifeless at his own door. Then there is the ghastly story of the man-eating family, whose crimes are discovered at last by a wandering pedlar who seeks shelter for the night at the lonely house in the waste. The pedlar is accosted in the doorway by the youngest child of the house, who remarks admiringly his fat hands,

and exclaims: "What nice pies they will make!" The pedlar takes to flight without another word, but the men of the house pursue him with bloodhounds, and the pedlar only escapes by crawling up to his neck in water under a bridge. Men and hounds are close about him above and below, but the dogs are foiled by the running water, and at daylight the chase is given up, and the pedlar crawls away, half dead, to bring the officers of justice upon the scene. The wretched ghouls expiated their crimes on the gibbet, and the house was levelled to the ground, but still at night the men and hounds are heard to urge their dreadful chase, and woe betide the poor soul that meets them! It may be said that official records of any such trial and condemnation are wanting. But it must not be hastily concluded, therefore, that the story is altogether baseless.

A more humorous story is that of the old woman who was a witch and used to traverse the country under the form of a hare. So well known were the old dame's vagaries, that it was the custom of the neighbouring farmers to bribe the old witch's husband to turn her out before their dogs. Puss always afforded an excellent course; but when hard pressed she would suddenly disappear. But one day as she was dashing over a stone-wall the foremost dog got a grip at her, and drew out a mouthful of hair; but, on the other side of the wall, nothing was to be seen but an old woman ruefully rubbing a wounded patch on her pate, and eyeing men and dogs with such malignant glance that all slunk hastily away.

But Leek itself is a handsome, well-built town, with a brisk manufacture in the way of silks and laces and such small wares; manufactures of considerable antiquity, which, like those of neighbouring Macclesfield, were no doubt founded by Protestant immigrants from the South of France. From Leek churchyard is visible a fine, wild landscape with a curiously-shaped summit called the Cloud, which, from the time of Dr. Plot, has had the reputation of causing the following curious phenomenon, namely, a double sunset, the sun disappearing behind the summit of the mountain, and crawling out again at its foot. It is only at the summer solstice that this wonderful sight is to be seen; so that it requires a little astronomical knowledge to fix the right time to observe it; and then, what with vapours, fogs, and clouds, the chances are that nothing but disappointment is the

result. However, the observer will have the pleasant chimes of Leek to console him for the disappointment—those pleasant chimes that ring out all manner of quaint old tunes, one of which, "St. David's," has the following homely and pleasant traditional accompaniment:

My father was a good old man,
Altho' he was but poor,
He made the chimes go eight o'clock,
Likewise go twelve and four.

Then there is an ancient though mutilated cross still to be seen in Leek churchyard, which, according to tradition, sinks a trifle deeper into the ground with each recurring year. When the cross finally disappears the end of Leek is not far distant, and, it is to be supposed, of the world in general. Some amount of keen observation has gone to the making up of this legend, for the gradual rise of the surface of a burial-ground is a certain fact as long as interments are continued.

In the seventeenth century Leek saw the rise of one of its sons, in the person of Parker, Earl of Macclesfield, who was the son of an attorney in the town, of respectable Puritan descent. Parker was born in 1666, in an old stone house, that may be standing still, at the upper end of the market-place; and was brought up to his father's profession, which he afterwards practised with much success at Derby. Presently Parker abandoned the lower walks of the profession, and was called to the Bar, taking at once the lead on the Midland Circuit, where he was known as silver-tongued Parker. He rose rapidly to the head of his profession, taking also a leading part in the House of Commons as member for Derby. Then he was made Lord Chief Justice, and raised to the peerage, and in 1718, to the surprise of everybody not in the secret, was made Lord Chancellor and Earl of Macclesfield. It does not appear that he was more unscrupulous than other lawyers of the period, but, trafficking a little too openly in the lucrative posts he had in his gift, he was pounced upon by political enemies, brought to the Bar before his peers, found guilty of malpractices, fined thirty thousand pounds, and sent to the Tower. On his way to his prison the crowd which had gathered to see the curious sight, not unwelcome perhaps to many, of the chief justiciar of the realm committed to prison as a malefactor, abused the fallen chancellor by repeating the then common saying, that Staffordshire had produced

the three greatest rogues in England—Jack Sheppard, Jonathan Wild, and Tom Parker.

Tom Parker, however, paid his fine, perhaps the largest ever imposed and actually recovered by process of law in England, and still retained sufficient fortune to endow the earls, his descendants, with goodly estates.

The rebels of 1745 left some traces of their passage at Leek, through which they marched, both on their advance to Derby and on their retreat. Among these is a story of a barrel, left by the Highlanders in the market-place of Leek, which nobody would touch, fearing some surprise in the nature of the Trojan horse, till it was claimed by the lords of the manor, and found to be full of money. There is generally some kernel of truth in the middle of popular stories, and this kernel, in the present instance, must be pronounced to be the empty barrel—for that the Scots left either good siller or good liquor behind them, is a thing impossible to be believed.

At Leek are some small remains of Delacres Abbey—originally, perhaps, Delacroix—the foundation of the famous Ranulph of Chester, the friend of monks and minstrels. That his title, however, of “the good” was not universally acknowledged, is evident from the following legend, taken from the chronicles of Delacres. On the day of the earl’s death, which happened near Wallingford, a great company in the likeness of men passed hastily by the cell of an anchorite living near, who demanded of the company whither they were wending so fast? To which they replied that they were dæmons making speed to the death-bed of Earl Ranulph. But the dæmons were disappointed after all, as when the earl’s doom was made known, the white mastiffs that kept guard at Delacres set up such a howling and roaring, that the Prince of Darkness became frightened, and turned the mighty earl out of his dominions. Possibly the latter part of the legend may be taken as a parable, and the monks to be shadowed forth as the white mastiffs of Delacres, and their services and prayers as the means of intimidating the Evil One. Or there may really have been some such breed of dogs at the abbey, the gift of Earl Ranulph, and the progenitors, perhaps, of certain fine breeds of dogs for which some of the moorland regions were noted. But, anyhow, the earl left his heart

to be buried under the high altar of the abbey, where the monks kept it safe enough till the dissolution, when monks and mastiffs are lost to sight.

It now only remains to take a hasty glance at the centre of the county where Stafford lies, too long neglected. But Stafford does not stand in the same relation to its county as York to Yorkshire, or Lincoln to Lincolnshire. It is no Hamlet in the play, but only Fortinbras who comes in at the end with drums and alarums. It is doubtful even whether Stafford could originally boast of a stone ford, a paved crossing, to its not very important river, the Sow. More likely it was only a stake ford, a crossing marked out with stakes here and there. And any importance it may have derived from Æthelfloed, who built one of her castles there, has long passed away with the castle itself and its feudal successors, leaving the town to its natural insignificance as a seat of assizes and quarter sessions, a polling-place, and the headquarters of a military district. The most important event in its annals, perhaps, is the birth of Izaak Walton, the genial father of the race of anglers, who should have been remembered in connection with Cotton and his favourite Dove-dale, but who, after all, is more of a London worthy than a Staffordshire one, and perhaps more at home on the Lea than on the Dove.

In quitting Staffordshire we pass through one more historic scene on its borders towards Shropshire—Bloreheath, that is, where there was a great fight between Yorkists and Lancastrians. The Earl of Salisbury, marching to join the Duke of York, at Ludlow, was here intercepted by the royal army under Lord Audley. The Lancastrians were ten thousand against five thousand, but Salisbury drew his adversary by a feigned retreat from an advantageous position on the steep bank of a small rivulet, and then turned upon the disordered royalists and routed them completely. Lord Audley fell, and with him, it is said, two thousand four hundred Cheshire gentlemen. Queen Margaret had watched the progress of the battle from the top of Muccleston church-tower, and when she saw the day was lost, she fled to Eccleshall Castle. The tower is still standing, although the church belonging to it has been rebuilt, and the traveller may survey the scene of the battle from the selfsame spot that the queen occupied ever so many centuries ago.

AN UNFINISHED TASK.

A STORY IN FOUR CHAPTERS. CHAPTER I.

NEARLY thirty-five years since, when the curtain of the world's stage was rising for Norman Leslie's first appearance, she had been his nurse. Afterwards, in early childhood, she had played the part of governess. In later life she acted as housekeeper, and in all that time Mrs. Pryor ruled in an absolute monarchy. She did so still, for the natives of Stanton Pomrey, a scattered parish in the heart of wild Dartmoor, had learnt to bow as meekly to her sway as their vicar himself, and the Rev. Norman Leslie never harboured a thought of rebellion.

He was essentially a meek man, feeble-minded, so some said; albeit, when occasion called it forth, this Devonshire vicar had a will of his own.

But such times were rare. All strife was so foreign to his nature, that the wonder was, that, as a young man, he could ever have borne Her Majesty's commission in a marching regiment, ere he left a life utterly distasteful to him for service under the more peaceful banner of the Church. The Rev. Norman Leslie, beyond doubt, made a better parson than a soldier, was far more fitted for the pastoral staff than the sword. Yet he was not a talented preacher. When Mrs. Pryor heard his first sermon, that good lady said at once that she "did not think much of it," and her theological views were quite correct. As a matter of fact, its author was far too humble, too conscious of his own demerits to think much of it himself. It was the best he could do, but he knew it for nothing very grand, and it is possible that, if Mrs. Pryor, as in childish days, had ordered him to his room until he could do better, he would have obeyed, and most certainly have remained there until now.

But he was loved and respected despite that. Good sermons are all very well, but the rough toilers around valued far more the hand which was ever ready to open to their wants, and the heart which held a ready sympathy for their sorrows. Possibly they took advantage. Each and every one seemed to think that the vicar's purse, scantily filled though it might be; the vicar's time, fully occupied as it was; was quite at their service. For advice or assistance the peasantry would knock him up at any hour of the night, and Aunt Pryor—he called her "aunt" in right of some distant relationship to his dead father—would invade his study a dozen

times a day. She regarded these hebdomadal discourses—which ought to have awakened the vicar's parishioners, and, sorrowful to say, had a precisely opposite effect—as a spontaneous growth. Ignorant of the exacting requirements of the modern editor, she failed to realise that the magazine articles eking out his poor income were not written without patient labour of the brain, and that thoughts, more free than the birds of the air, could, like them, be chased away, to return no more.

It was the third time Mrs. Pryor had interrupted him that morning, yet he bore it with unfailing fortitude, and listened calmly to various home-troubles; to the details of Widow Brown's lumbago, and the decease in the rapid waters of the Dart of that cherished possession of the Ridler family, their only pig.

"Well, aunt, what can we do for them? There are a few bottles left, but port is bad for rheumatism. And as for the Ridders——"

The vicar, seated at a desk, clear for once of all manuscript, absently looked in. There was a gleam of something—not gold and silver of the realm, nothing which could avail for the Ridders' porcine trouble, nothing for Mrs. Pryor's eyes; and he closed it quietly.

"How stands the exchequer? Rather low just now, I fear, but we must do something for these poor people."

"I am sure I don't know," rejoined Mrs. Pryor. "Trouble and poverty are all around us. It is natural, after such a hard winter, and no one to do aught but you, Norman. Even Miss Perryman has not given much this year, and as for the Hold, although as lord of the manor they are his poor as much as yours, Colonel Langridge has done nothing. With his abundance it is a shame."

"Hush!" said the Rev. Norman. "It is not for us to judge. We do not know; and if rumour speaks truly, the Langridge wealth is not so great. Still, I think if Pomrey Hold were mine——"

"Why, you would be as badly off as you are now," interrupted his aunt.

She strove to speak with asperity, rebuking his lack of worldly prudence, and failed. For she still regarded him as her charge; loved him, and admired the staunch, brave heart with no thought of self.

"Yes, as badly off, I say, and everybody else the richer."

"Now, I wonder what you mean," he answered with a quiet smile; "something is coming when you begin by praising me like that. For it is praise, you know, aunt."

"Then not meant as such," she retorted, smiling herself in spite of her words. "But I came to speak about those children. There, listen to that. They are supposed to be at their lessons. Do you hear?"

It was a superfluous question. The vicarage was by no means a mansion, and the laughter of two young voices was very audible. He had heard it before. It had broken in once or twice on the silence of his study—had disturbed his thoughts, engaged so laboriously over some composition, that he had been writing about one line in ten minutes, until, at Mrs. Pryor's entrance, it had been thrust out of sight.

"Do you hear?" she enquired again. "What do you think they are doing?"

"Well, I should fancy having rather a good time," he answered.

"They are laughing and chattering over a lot of valentines. They've been wasting their money at the village-shop. I never thought of such things when I was young."

"I never had much to do with them myself," he said in a dreamy way. "I don't look that romantic kind of man, do I, aunt? Hardly a young lady's idea of a valentine?"

Mrs. Pryor regarded him curiously, not replying for a moment. His words were true enough. There was nothing gay or debonair about this Dartmoor vicar. He looked even more than his thirty-five years of age, and the bright February sunshine seemed to deepen the lines in a grave face, in which was much to admire, but nothing to call handsome.

Aunt Pryor laid her hand upon his shoulder, and kissed the broad brow, even as his dead mother might have done, and there was a trace of sadness in the action.

"You would be a prize for any woman," she rejoined, "But many prizes go unvalued in this world."

She was looking at him so earnestly, with such a pitying glance, that he turned his face away, with a slightly heightened colour, and spoke in assumed carelessness.

"Let the children enjoy themselves. There is no harm in their valentines."

"They should rather be at their lessons," she suggested. "If Grace—if Miss Luttrell

was firmer with them, more like a proper, a regular governess——"

"You forget," he said gently. "I have no claim upon Grace. It is good of her to do what she does. And neither Amy nor Kate is quite tractable."

They were not. It was true. These two children of a worthless brother, cared for by him, because there was no one else to do it, disregarded his authority, and set at naught the mild rule of Grace Luttrell, the vicar's ward, and the daughter of a dear, dead friend.

"I am not so sure of that," answered Aunt Pryor. "Remember, Norman, Grace has sojourned under this roof for two years, and you have received not a penny."

"That is not the poor girl's fault," he said. "The lawyers in London tell me——"

"The lawyers in London," she interrupted, "won't pay things in Devonshire; and the delay is rather hard on you."

"It will all come right in time," he said quietly. "You know how my poor friend was involved. When Captain Luttrell's affairs are finally adjusted, Grace should own some two thousand pounds. Enough, I think, to settle my small bill."

Aunt Pryor was going to say something further. He stopped her. It was an unusual thing, but he did.

"Will you, please, leave me now? I have some writing to finish."

When she was gone the vicar of Stanton Pomrey reopened his desk. It was certainly not a sermon which his aunt had interrupted. There are dandies even in the Church. But the daintiest, most highly-perfumed, curled darling of a ritualistic curate has not yet taken to write his discourses on lace-bordered paper.

CHAPTER II.

THE Rev. Norman Leslie's ideas were fairly routed at length. Slow as was his work, he yet had made some progress. But that last invasion had scattered his thoughts to pieces, and when Aunt Pryor left him, she seemed to have taken even the fragments away with her.

He laboured over one or two more sentences, but failed to shape them to his satisfaction, and finally he laid his pen aside, and gazed from the window.

It was a fair prospect. As if repenting of its late severity, winter seemed to have passed away all at once. The birds were twittering to each other that there should

be no more frost and snow; that the bare trees would soon be putting forth bud and leaf; that it was the Eve of St. Valentine, and high time to begin to think about house-keeping. Under the late afternoon sun, the wide-spreading moorland was showing a thousand of those rare tints, neither yellow, nor grey, nor green, in which Dame Nature, casting aside her sombre winter robes, first endues herself, ere she comes forth in the glory of her summer fashions. Far away in the distance, the great granite tors, like giant sentinels, rose clear against the sky. And winding in and out, now lost in purple shadows, now glistening, a silver streak, through the landscape, leaped, and ran, and babbled, the Rev. Norman's cherished trout-stream.

"It is full late in the day," he muttered, glancing longingly at his favourite fly-rod. "So very early in the season too. And yet they ought to rise. No," resisting the thought as he was accustomed to resist many temptations, "I must finish my work. And yet—and yet, what use will it be?"

Apparently the vicar was not the only one who had thought of fishing that day, for as he turned again to the casement, he saw a young man in angling attire, carelessly swinging a rod, and by his side Grace Luttrell.

Was it an omission? Was Grace so absorbed in low, earnest conversation that she could ignore his existence? Whenever she neared the vicar's study window, there had been a bright glance, a happy smile for this grave guardian of hers. Now her face was averted, turned, perhaps, from the westering sunlight, which made a wealth of deeper gold in her fair hair, lingered on the rare beauty of her face, and gazed so boldly into the peaceful depths of those grey eyes, that they sought the ground as she passed by.

Not so her companion. He bent his head a little lower and whispered a word. It brought a warmer flush to the girl's cheek—at twenty-two blushes are swift in coming and going—but Grace did not look up, the other did.

"How are you, Mr. Leslie? I had hoped to meet you by the water, such a day as this."

"I had some thoughts of it," rejoined the vicar, "but I was busy. I had some—some task in hand, and," changing the subject, "I did not know you were with us, Mr. Langridge."

The younger man laughed carelessly.

"Yes, I ran down two days since. I got leave, as my father wanted me on some legal business, which kept me from the water till now. It is a wonderfully early river of ours. Fellows in town will hardly believe in a dish of trout killed in the middle of February. But here they are, and I wish you had been with us—with me."

The vicar had swung open the casement to grasp the new comer's hand. He was a handsome young fellow enough, but despite his cheery voice and gay manner, there was some little impalpable restraint between them.

"You could well bear solitude if the fish rose so well," was the reply. "But you were not alone all the time?"

"No," answered the other. He was a self-possessed young man, almost too much so for his years, which were not many more than Grace's, and in no way to be disconcerted. "No, my last brace or so should have been grateful to fate, for they died under the eyes of Miss Luttrell."

"Which reconciled them to the skill of Mr. Langridge;" and, gravely smiling, the older man prepared to close the casement.

"One moment. Why 'Mr. Langridge?'" queried the young officer. "It used to be Cuthbert when I was your pupil, a better one by the stream, I fear, than with Sophocles and Xenophon. May I come in and show you my spoils? And, Mr. Leslie, I want to speak to you on another—a more important matter."

The Rev. Norman Leslie's face was shadowed with a sadness which he was powerless to conceal. He read what was coming; read it in the blushing embarrassment of Grace Luttrell, stealing shyly away; in the almost triumphant pride and exultation of the young man, surely too much for the capture of a few fish; and it was the voice of one awakened to a deep sorrow which answered:

"Come in, by all means. My task is over, and I am quite at your service."

Then the vicar of Stanton Pomrey returned to his desk.

It lay there still—that same bit of delicate laced and gilt-edged paper. His task was over. He had said so. Over, yet not completed. So he took it up with reluctant hand, and once more hid it from sight, as the lieutenant was at the door.

Theirs was not a long interview. The visitor did most of the talking, and his utterances were rapid and eager, in marked contrast with the almost stern business-

like speech of the other. The cold unimpassioned tone chafed the younger man, and he broke out at last in hearty warmth:

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Leslie, is this quite generous?"

"Is what generous?" came the quiet reply. "Of what do you complain, Mr. Langridge, or rather Cuthbert? Do I throw any obstacles in the way of your happiness? I owe a duty to a dear dead friend. Remember Miss Luttrell is my ward."

"You ask me so many questions," said the other. "As my father's son—as heir to Pomrey Hold, I should be a fit alliance. I will not complain. But you, sir, are so cautious; you speak as if love were always to be mistrusted, as if no one could prize my dear Grace save yourself."

A swift spasm of pain swept over the vicar's features, but his face was turned away. When he spoke again, his voice was composed as ever, and he rose and took the young man's hand. There was an evident reluctance in the action—a reluctance of which this poor country parson was ashamed, and he strove to hide it.

"Your Grace, as you say, Cuthbert. I stand not in your way; I wish you every good thing, now and in the future. I suppose you will see Grace as you go out?" trying bravely to smile. "Will you ask her to come to me here?"

It is a serious matter the discussing of a marriage offer with a ward, and, left alone, this guardian went through some rather serious preparations. The glow of the sunset was dying away outside, yet he drew the curtain across the window. The fire was leaping merrily; he took the poker and beat down each flickering flame. When he looked up, Grace Luttrell was there, and with grave, old-fashioned courtesy, he placed a chair for her and took one himself with his back to what little light there was.

"Grace, I suppose it is hardly necessary for me to say why I sent for you?"

Again that pretty pink flush was in the girl's face—he saw it even in the shadowed room.

"I know," in a whisper; then, in answer to his cold tone: "Mr. Leslie, you are not angry with us? You do not dislike him—Cuthbert Langridge? You will not oppose our happiness?"

"A good many questions, my dear girl," he said kindly. "Let me answer them with one: How can I oppose? You are over age."

"If I were over age a hundred times, I yet would yield to your judgment, Mr. Leslie—my poor father's friend, and mine."

"Thank you, Grace. But," with a smile, "in that case my duties as guardian would be very light. However, in this, the authority from which you will not emancipate yourself, sees nothing to disapprove. Cuthbert Langridge should be wealthy and of good family. And, Grace, you love him? Forgive me, but it is all so new to me. I knew not that you had seen much of each other. I never dreamt——"

"Nay," she interrupted; "rather forgive me. It is my only deception. I should have told you before. But it—it was only this day, and you were so absorbed in your books, your studies, that you——"

"Never noticed," he finished quietly, "like the dull, prosaic man I am. You love him, Grace? I mean you are not dazzled with his position—you are sure of your heart?"

"I am sure."

With no trace of doubt she uttered the words. Even in the obscurity he could see the faith and affection in those truthful grey eyes.

"His position is not so grand as some think," she went on. "He has no secrets from me, and the family have had many reverses. But, rich or poor, Cuthbert would ever be the same to me."

"And Cuthbert is a most fortunate man, my dear," he rejoined. "I pray that you may both be very happy."

He rose from his chair; he took her hands in his, and, bending his head, tenderly kissed her cheek. The vicar did it slowly, solemnly, as one kissing the dead. To him it was kissing the dead. For, with that kiss, the Rev. Norman Leslie put away from his heart a dear love which he had cherished there—a love which had been growing for many days; a love which died out then in a despairing sorrow.

Alone, he looked again at his unfinished task, never to be completed now, and with a weary smile for his own presumption, laid it away to be seen no more.

THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR

ALL THE

ROUND

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS

NO. 795. NEW SERIES.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 1884.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

A DRAWN GAME.

BY BASIL.

AUTHOR OF "LOVE THE DEED," ETC.

CHAPTER XX. DUNS.

MRS. TUCK, as regards the match-making in hand, was like a skilful joiner who has to do with green wood—mortice it cunningly as he will it is liable after a little to shrink and start apart.

Ida was not in love at all, and Dick not ardently.

"Their loving voyage seemed but for two months victualled." There was every probability of their parting company before that time, when something occurred to intensify the seriousness of Dick's suit. In fact, the Philistines were upon him. Creditors to whom for years he had been civil, whom he had again and again admitted to an audience, and entertained with his happiest efforts, and with the happiest results; these very men, with incredible ingratitude, turned round upon him and demanded peremptorily an immediate settlement of their accounts.

Dick was much hurt by this revelation of the depths of human baseness. Like King Lear, he felt sharper than a serpent's tooth this treatment from those amongst whom he had magnanimously divided all he had to give—his custom. And what chiefly surprised and pained Dick, as he observed to his aunt, was to find that "the beggars with whom he had dealt longest were the most insolent!"

In truth, these Gonerils and Regans not only cut off the supplies, but overwhelmed him with abuse.

Dick's manner failing for the first time to be irresistible, he was fain to appease these harpies by the announcement of his engagement to a girl with six thousand pounds a year. Knowing that they would take

fifty per cent. off the fortune, he doubled the size of the figure to suit the short sight of their faith. Even then they couldn't see it. They liked not the security. In fact, they disbelieved in the fortune, in the engagement, in the girl herself, on the truly excellent ground of Dick's protestations of their existence.

"They doubt my word!" he cried in indignant amazement.

"Maybe you cried 'Wolf, wolf!' too often, Dick."

"Faith, aunt, it was always at the door. Poverty," he continued, with a meditative melancholy, as though face to face for the first time with the mystery of evil; "poverty is the devil!"

"Money, Dick, money. St. James says, 'Money is the root of all evil!'"

"To Jews! We're told he wrote specially for Jews, bad luck to them!" with a bitterness singular from him, but justified by his embittering pecuniary relations with the chosen people. "They've most of the money of the world among them, and play the deuce with it and no mistake; but it's the want of it that plays the deuce with a Christian. A poor man's like the small boy at school, he gets kicked all round. You saw that little snob in the hall, didn't you? He looked as if he'd slept in his clothes for a month without washing; fancy that infernal little cad telling me in so many words that I lied! I'd a great mind to pitch him out of the window to give him something to sue me for!"

"He's going to sue you?"

"So he says."

"We must let your engagement be known."

"I don't see how that would stop it, as it's got out that she's not to have a penny."

"Oh, once your engagement is known we can safely contradict that."

"What would be the good? 'Give a lie ten minutes start,' said Dan O'Connell, 'and all the truth in the world won't overtake it.' No, aunt; I see nothing for it but getting married, that is, if Mr. Tuck is safe to come down with something handsome on her marriage. He will, won't he?"

"He'll give something, I dare say."

"Ten thousand pounds?"

"Ten thousand pounds!"

"Five, then; he can't give her less than five."

"Five thousand pounds would be the very outside, Dick."

"Well, I might make five thousand do."

He would have discounted his prospects cheerfully for five thousand pounds down, if he had been sure of its extricating him from his immediate difficulties. For Dick would not merely kill the goose that laid golden eggs, but he would break for its yolk of gold an egg from which such a goose would certainly have been hatched.

"You don't owe five thousand pounds, Dick?" in consternation.

"I'm sure I can't say, aunt," with the utmost nonchalance. "Burgoyne would know. I've a letter or two from him somewhere, which I hadn't time to read."

Burgoyne was Dick's man of law and business, whose letters, as certain to be unpleasant, he had thrown aside unopened.

"But if you do get five thousand pounds and it's all swallowed up by debts at once, what have you left to live on?"

"You, aunt, you. My dear aunt, you couldn't live without Ida, and you must take her with her engagements."

Dick's impudence was of an engaging kind, and, besides, what he said was quite true—his aunt could not live without Ida.

"There must be no more duns then, Dick."

"Amen! I'm sure I don't want them, and no one has tried harder to keep clear of them. How that Ryan fellow found me out I can't imagine; but, faith, they're like vultures; they scent their prey miles off, and ten minutes after one swoops down on it, the ground's black with 'em."

"There's but one safe way to keep clear of them, Dick—to keep within your income."

"That is not half a bad idea, aunt, and I shall try it when I have an income."

"I don't know what you call three

hundred pounds a year, Dick. I had to make two hundred and fifty pounds do for many a year."

"Aye, but you had no expenses, aunt," with a humorous twinkle in his eyes. His aunt was as much tickled as Dick himself by this putting beyond question "the expenses," as though they were not the very thing in question.

In truth, his aunt was infatuated with Dick, and not his aunt only. It was hardly possible for anyone not to be overpowered in his presence by the charm of his face and manner—a charm which he had the art to make you believe only to exist, or only to be exerted for your sake, while he addressed himself to you. As this charm is inexpressible by description we despair of making credible Dick's conquests of hearts, from those of belles to those of bailiffs.

Yet Ida's was not conquered. Dick, sore pressed for the payment of his debts to others, pressed her sore for the payment of her debt to him. Still she hesitated and hung back, shrinking from the final, irretraceable step as certain to be as fatal as it was false. But, the outworks having been taken, it was not to be expected that the citadel would hold out long against Dick's hot assaults and the daily sapping and mining of Mrs. Tuck. Nor did it. Ida was at last worried and wearied into a consent to an early marriage, and Mrs. Tuck turned then her victorious arms against her poor dear husband to win more than a mere approval of the match—a substantial dowry—from him. The main thing was to come upon him in one of those rare moments when his mind was easy and unpreoccupied with fears of some imminent and deadly disease. At present it was gloomy with the terror of approaching paralysis. Whenever his foot or hand fell asleep Mrs. Tuck was at once sent for in a panic to prescribe, or to reassure him that a prescription was unnecessary.

These fears at last culminated one evening at dinner, when Mr. Tuck suddenly exclaimed in a voice of sad resignation:

"It has come at last!"

"What is it now, dear?" asked Mrs. Tuck in a tone of rather thin, worn-out sympathy.

"Paralysis! I've lost all feeling in my left leg."

"It's my leg you've been pinching, if you mean that," said Dick in an injured tone. Mr. Tuck, by carefully tracing his left leg from its source, was relieved to find

that he had indeed misappropriated the ill-used Dick's right leg.

"I really beg your pardon," with a demonstrative politeness, whose fervour was due to this relief from his horrible misgiving.

"Don't mention it," said Dick cheerily. "It was a very natural mistake, for my foot was asleep." This pleasant acceptance of Mr. Tuck's confusion of their identity helped to turn the laugh a little aside from the old gentleman's fatuity. Dick, however, with much tact took the thing as seriously as Mr. Tuck himself, and entered with surprising zest upon a dissertation on paralysis, laying down the law in his usual easy, absolute way. Both Dick and his aunt had the knack of picking up odds and ends and unconsidered trifles of knowledge on all subjects, and of piecing them together into a veneer that seemed solid at first sight. Besides, Dick laid down the law with a dogmatism so assured as to suggest that he must have made the subject in question the study of his life. Accordingly, Mr. Tuck listened with amazement and respect to Dick's disquisition on paralysis and its symptoms, which, it seemed, were precisely the opposite to those for which Mr. Tuck was always on the look-out. In vain Mr. Tuck quoted all his medical oracles. Dick made, indeed, loftily the concession that there were cases of which these were the premonitory symptoms, but they were invariably the cases of men whose habit of body was the precise opposite to that of Mr. Tuck. Here Dick was on the right tack. Mr. Tuck loved to talk, and to hear talk, about his constitution, which Dick made out to be in the main something like the British constitution, rather pury, plethoric, and flatulent, but sound on the whole. Mr. Tuck was as much amazed as delighted by the extraordinary insight and interest Dick showed in his discourse upon the only constitution worth a thought in the world, and he held out at some length that night to Mrs. Tuck on the mistake of a profession her nephew had made. Most certainly he ought to have been a doctor.

"A doctor!" Mrs. Tuck was affronted by the degrading suggestion, and mentioned a few of the Irish kings to whom Dick was akin. From this she branched off by a natural digression to all the brilliant matches which had been proposed to him in right of his birth, explaining his rejection thereof quite casually at the close by his constancy to Ida. This was one of Mrs. Tuck's

roundabout ways of broaching a critical subject. She would let drop carelessly and incidentally a passing allusion to it while on some other subject, as though the startling news was either notorious or unimportant.

"Attached to Ida!" exclaimed Mr. Tuck. "I should have thought he'd something else to think of," viz., hydrophobia.

Mrs. Tuck understood the allusion.

"Oh, it was long before that. He has loved her, I think, ever since he knew her. He'd have asked your consent to pay his addresses to her, if you hadn't been so upset with one thing or another of late."

"But she doesn't care for him?"

"I think she does."

"Why, you told me she cared for Seville-Sutton," as, indeed, Mrs. Tuck had.

"Now, James," in an aggrieved tone of remonstrance, "you know very well I said nothing of the sort. I said the Don cared for her, or for her fortune at least; but he has declared off since you told him you meant to leave your money to an asylum—a most appropriate bequest, I must say," bitterly.

"I told him!"

"Well, told some one who told him. Anyhow he heard of it, and drew off at once. Not that it mattered, for she'd never have had him, he's such a stick."

"It's the finest estate in the county."

"My dear James, Ida's not the girl to marry a stick, even if it were a gold stick—a gold stick in waiting," scornfully. "If you changed your mind to-morrow he'd change his; but Ida'll never change hers—you may depend upon that."

"I never said a word to him or any one about leaving money to a lunatic asylum," querulously, harking back to this grievance. His thoughts by no centrifugal force could be kept long flying wide from himself. "I said something about leaving money to an hospital when you were worrying me to make a will."

"I don't know what you call worrying. I merely suggested to you, the last time you were going to die, that your mind might be easier if your will were made."

Mrs. Tuck regretted her vengeance in the moment of taking it, and hastened to kiss the place and make it well.

"Indeed, James, the worrying is all the other way. You keep me in continual misery about your health, though you know my life is bound up with yours. I can't bear to hear you always talking as if you were going to die. I can't even

bear to think of such men as Mr. Seville-Sutton counting on your death, wishing for it, and watching to find you worse every day. I'd much rather you'd give Ida something on her marriage, and have done with it at once."

This shaft shot home. Mr. Tuck had always imagined his health a subject of universal interest, but never of an interest of this vulturous kind. It was sickening to think that such men should exist; but as it was not possible to prevent or remedy their existence, it remained only to cut away the basis of their ghoulis speculations. Now Mr. Tuck's horror of such speculations was not merely sentimental. He was full of superstitions, and had a vague kind of idea that his health might be injuriously affected by these diabolical longings for his death.

This brilliant stroke Mrs. Tuck followed up by observing that, fortunately, all men were not so mercenary as Mr. Seville-Sutton, instancing Dick, who didn't dare even to think of Ida until he heard that she had been disinherited. But she protested Dick's disinterestedness so much, that Mr. Tuck began to hope he would take Ida not only without prospects, but without even a present dowry. Wherefore Mrs. Tuck had to lay great stress on the importance to the world of the Tuck family credit being kept at the high level it had attained and maintained for so many centuries.

When, however, Mrs. Tuck had made it clear that Ida must have a dowry, not of course in Dick's interests, but in those of the honour of the house of Tuck, her poor dear husband was stricken with sudden and serious misgivings as to the propriety of Dick's marrying at all, to say nothing of his marrying Ida. For was there not hydrophobia in his blood, which might break out at any moment, and might even be handed down to his children? In the public interest, and as a matter of mere public policy, Dick should be doomed to celibacy. This public-spirited objection Mrs. Tuck also overruled with her usual diplomatic skill, and wrung at last from her poor dear husband, not only his assent to the marriage, but the promise of a dowry for Ida of ten thousand pounds. The amount was beyond her utmost expectations, but was of course promised on the condition that neither she nor Dick was to look for anything more at his death. Mrs. Tuck in this matter had overshoot the mark a little, having roused in

Mr. Tuck such a morbid horror of making any one a beneficiary by his death, that henceforth nothing would induce him to make a will while the faintest hope of life remained to him. Mrs. Tuck, of course, readily agreed to this arrangement, by which, equally of course, she had not the slightest intention to abide. She knew perfectly well that she would have the dictation of her poor dear husband's will when it came at last to be made, and she had generously determined that, with the reservation of a moderate provision for herself, every penny of his fortune should go to Ida. For Mrs. Tuck, false, tricky, and mercenary as she has shown herself, had yet some idea of justice, and a very high idea indeed of generosity. If she had been born to the good fortune she achieved late in a harassed life, she would not have been given more than most women to cunning and deceit, the weapons of weakness; but in her childhood she had been bullied into falsehood by a harsh stepmother, and for the rest of her life, up to her second marriage, she had been almost forced by circumstances into a weary struggle to make twopence-halfpenny in copper pass for a silver threepence.

REMINISCENCES OF JAMAICA.

IN THREE PARTS. PART III.

THE natives of Jamaica are childishly and ridiculously superstitious, every action, word, and thought is full of the supernatural. They are horribly and unmistakably afraid of spirits, a fact which induced me to think that something must be visible to them, though unseen by our eyes. I came to this conclusion, not from conviction, or because I ever saw the shadow of a duppy (ghost), though Admiralty House was supposed to be peopled with several deceased commodores, but because the fear is everywhere—not confined to hundreds or thousands, but universal in the breast of every black man, woman, and child in Jamaica, educated and ignorant. I know this inordinate terror was extremely inconvenient. When once a duppy had possession of a house its value went down proportionately, as no native servants would sleep in it for love or money.

"But, Mrs. M——," I said to our coloured nurse, who was nervous about going out under the shadow of some large trees at night, "have you ever seen any yourself?" "Yes, m'a!" she exclaimed in a high shrill tone, her black eyes opening wide. "I

have seen a plenty, m'a. Good king!" The last, a Jamaica exclamation resembling "Good Heavens!" at the bare remembrance of what she had seen. "But what are they like?" I continued. "Like duppies, m'a," was the only explanation I could get.

When Miss N——, the celebrated amateur flower-painter, came to the hills to paint the "Mountain glory," as it appeared radiant on the hillside, she took Gardens House. Here, sitting before her easel in the cool verandah, double glasses in hand, she looked across the ravine and beheld this magnificent lilac flower in its greatest beauty, shooting up in giant spikes from cliffs quite inaccessible to man, but, having no English servant, she had to sleep in the spacious, silent old house quite alone. Each day at sundown the servants left her, and trooped merrily down to their homes at Gordon Town, where entire families herd together as thick as they can stow, in an atmosphere much resembling that of a slave-deck in the Mozambique Channel. Gardens Great House had, unfortunately, "a bad name."

I was returning home by moonlight on one occasion alone after a bazaar, and had sent the servants on before. I had passed safely over the dangerous plank, which, at that time, constituted our only means of crossing the river, and was mounting the steep path, when, crouched down on a stone, with his face buried in his hands, I recognised our stalwart cook. "What are you doing here, F——?" I said. "I told you to go on quickly and get me some tea." "Yes, missus," said he, starting up and following me closely. "I waitin' 'pon missus, de carner round dere," pointing to a thick clump of trees ahead. "Dat carner have a bad neame. Plenty duppies dere, my king!" I laughed heartily as we passed the suspected corner, in which he feebly and shakily joined, but he never left my shadow till a cheerful, blazing fire in the kitchen and cook's quarters came into view, when he made a dart in at the door, shutting it safely behind him.

Rats have a great deal to do with duppies, I am convinced; our house had a singularly bad name for both these nightly visitants; but our servants and family were altogether so numerous, filling up every room, that, except when we were down at Port Royal, and the place silent and empty—when awful histories were recounted on our return—duppies did not trouble our household much. Lying awake

in my bedroom, which gave on to the verandah, I often heard during the quietest hours, slow, pattering, uncertain steps, and then some heavier body being dragged over the dry, sounding old chestnut floor, followed by a stifled cry. Stockings, boots, gloves, and quite large dolls used mysteriously to disappear every night, and for some time we never could account for it, until in one corner of the verandah a hole was discovered, out of which protruded the foot of a highly-respected and deeply-mourned doll. After this we set traps with great success, catching some aged rats of enormous size and strength, capable of mortal combat with an army of duppies.

To make a hideous noise is considered efficacious in scaring away duppies. Long before it is light, hundreds of women bearing the produce of the little yam-patch on their heads, meallies, bananas, koko, skellion, yam, all on their way to the market at Kingston, stream down the mountain paths, each one in turn making a frightful noise, something between scaring crows and a yell; this is taken up by the next one ahead, and thus partially reassured they trudge on till welcome daylight appears, when their spirits rise, and the ceaseless and senseless chatter, peculiar to the Jamaican female, commences; when it ends none can tell—certainly not till sundown and the reign of duppies again. Conversation is carried on at the very top of a particularly harsh voice; you would fancy that they were one and all quarrelling violently. Not at all, they are only conversing in their natural tones like a parcel of jays, each lady addressing her companion as ma'am, shortened into m'a, with much apparent formality. Their gait is remarkable: shoulders square and hips swaying under the tremendous burthen carried with such ease and grace on their heads; they get over the ground at an astonishing pace, their gowns kilted high, giving free play to their limbs, till "fashion" demands that it shall be loosed to trail about a foot on the ground, along the filthy streets of Kingston.

A servant of all work is almost unknown in this country, each one having his or her particular department, beyond which they rather pride themselves on knowing nothing. Their leisurely movements and slow rate of work would scandalise an active English housekeeper. Our house-cleaner in the hills resided at the Gardens. About nine a.m. she would saunter in provided with her stock-in-trade, which consisted of a few fresh limes, a rubber, and

some bees-wax. Paraffine was occasionally substituted for the limes. After living upon her knees for several hours, at work upon the floor, and making our nice rooms, though open to the outer air, smell dreadfully of Jamaica women, flavoured with cocoa-nut oil, with which they plentifully bedaub their heads, she would announce that her "toot hurt her" (toothache) and depart, trailing a horrid old greenish-black gown after her. For this entertainment we paid two shillings.

The hardest worked and worst paid servant is the market-woman, an institution peculiar to the hills, where, as there are no tradespeople, supplies must be procured daily from the market at Kingston. For the poor sum of one shilling and sixpence per day, a fine, tall, strapping young woman willingly walks twelve miles into Kingston, bringing back a heavy load upon her head, uphill the whole way. When ice had to be brought during the illness of our child, the poor market-woman constantly arrived with the melted water streaming from the basket on her head, down the nape of her neck and back, and so to the ground, forming little pools wherever she rested for a moment.

The many virtues of our coloured nurse have been recounted in a former paper upon Port Royal.* There everything was conducted in the household with naval regularity, but in the hills each servant would have squatted outside the kitchen-door in the sun, doing nothing, thinking of nothing, for at least ten hours out of the twenty-four, had it not been for the ceaseless supervision exercised over their goings-out and comings-in, by my trusty English maid and housekeeper, of whose fine presence and awe-inspiring demeanour they stood in wholesome dread. She was a great power among them, and could beat down the market-women to half what they impudently but smilingly demanded of me, and when their "toot hurt them," or their head—they suffer much from neuralgia in their rotten teeth, caused by an inordinate fondness for sugar-cane—they would come to her in a dejected and forlorn way, ridiculous to behold, as to one who could certainly cure every ill, and in whose pepper-plasters they had unbounded confidence.

Except in the comparatively rare instance of a mountain storm, profound stillness usually reigned during the night at the Gardens. Leaning out of the wide

verandah-window when the moon had risen, a beautiful soft radiance bathed the lovely valley and gorge, glinting upon the shingle roofs of the buildings at Gordon Town, and lighting up the foaming Hope and its grey rocks with burnished silver. It was especially resting, when worn with cares and anxieties as to what the morrow might bring forth, to listen to the rejoicings of millions of happy insects who came out of their shady bowers when night fell, and frolicked in the glad air. Fire-flies hurled themselves across the grass, coming down with such force as to extinguish their light for an instant, when on they went in their mad flight; frogs and tree-frogs in chorus croaked out their satisfaction; beetles, moths, locusts, and a great fat green insect the shape of a turtle, banged themselves against the window-sashes in a gallant endeavour to storm the lights within. All Nature seemed glad in the mere fact of living—each voice becoming mute as if by one consent just before the dawn of day. One night, between two and three, I became aware that the soft notes of a multitude of wind instruments were floating down the ravine; they sounded in my half-awakened ears like the music of heaven. Now it was gone, and must have been only a dream, when lo! a fresh burst, coming nearer, convinced me that it was no dream, but the homeward-bound regiment marching by night from Newcastle to Kingston for embarkation. How lovely the swelling notes of a wailing march, dying away almost to silence as they wound round one of the mountain gorges, and swelling out as they emerged again! Gordon Town is reached, and level ground; here the full band bursts forth into Home, Sweet Home. Louder and louder, tramp, tramp, as one man, I could hear their firm, glad feet. They are going home, home! while we have yet more than a year to stay. I could hardly bear it by the time they had played the last note, and were gone far beyond my hearing down to the plains below. Home-sickness seizes one with irresistible force when unnerved by anxiety and illness.

Society for us was at that time a dead letter; we were shunned as if plague-stricken, and with reason, after the yellow-fever. Twice a week when ——— returned from Port Royal, we trooped down to the Gardens to meet his carriage and carry up the packages; this was the only glimpse of the outer world we ever got. After a while our visits to Port Royal became

* ALL THE YEAR ROUND, New Series, Vol. 32, p. 389, "Port Royal."

more frequent as the place resumed its healthiness, and the crews returned refreshed and cheered from Bermuda. A long line of reddish graves on the palisades, and the three at Craigton, reminded us, who were spared, of how much we had to be thankful for. At first, though looked at askance by the few white people, we attended the well-kept little church in Gordon Town, where they are fortunate in the possession of a good and kindly clergyman; but as a tramp up and down in the sun from eleven to one knocked up most of us for the day—we became very careful, from sad experience, only to go out morning and evening—a regular service of our own was established in the front verandah. It was punctually attended by all the servants, who would on no account have “shirked,” as many an English household does, whenever it is practicable. A pleasant and attentive congregation they made in the smartest of Sunday clothes, and countenances to match, joining in the hymns and chants with melody and goodwill. In crossing the rooms, the dry old floors resounded to the tread of their heavy splay feet. Quite absurd it was to see them huddled together, each one conscious only of his remarkably thick boots, and trying, but in vain, to subdue some of their inordinate creaking by a futile endeavour to tread gingerly. Safely arrived at the seats provided, tremendous sighs, enough to blow a baby away, escaped them, continued at frequent intervals throughout the service. Sunday must have been truly a day of penance, for on no other occasion, save a wedding or funeral, do they ever wear boots, shoes, or thick black cloth clothes. The women, if possible, present a still greater contrast between everyday attire and a gorgeous Sunday toilette. Light-green is a very favourite colour, well distended over starched petticoats that stand alone, a train of ample length and width trailing behind in the dust or mud, as the case may be; hair, glistening with coconut oil, tightly plaited in innumerable little tails, as if in a vain endeavour to straighten some of its wiry crinkles, surmounted with a white straw hat, loaded with gay and cheap flowers and ribbons of every hue. A prayer and hymn book, bound round with a clean and never-to-be-unfolded pocket-handkerchief, is considered important, whether they can read or not. Thus attired, the Jamaica woman proceeds leisurely, with great dignity of carriage,

bridling and smirking, on her way to church. Very seldom is a really handsome woman to be met with. The eyes are too much like restless black beads, cheek-bones too high, and the mouth too coarse for beauty, but many faces are most attractive, particularly when lighted up with pleasure or amusement.

Craigton Church was always well-filled, ministered to by the good and charitable man who for half his lifetime has lived, beloved and trusted, among them. When this church was blown down in a violent hurricane (so violent that even some solid marble crosses were laid low and hurled to the bottom of the valley, where they were found after many days' search), the poorest dwellers in countless little huts round about, contributed something each month to the rebuilding, and sat contented under the shady side of the hill, listening to their dear pastor, from his pulpit—the only thing remaining entire—under a pine-tree.

There is a good deal of revivalism in the mountains, when curious scenes of real or simulated religious enthusiasm are enacted. We always knew pretty well if a revival meeting was going on in one or other of the little tenements above us, the most heartrending cries and groans proceeding from the subject “whom the Spirit had moved;” but beyond winding themselves up to a pitch of fervour nearly resembling insanity, when they would cast themselves upon the earth and writhe as if in torment, I never heard that it influenced them any way, or to any good or useful purpose.

Two earthquakes occurred while we were in Jamaica; the first, in the middle of the night, awoke the Aboukir's people, who thought her anchors had been suddenly let go and all the cables run out, accompanied by a violent trembling of the ship, which caused a very serious leak in her worm-eaten timbers. I was asleep at Trafalgar, St. Ann's, when I awoke feeling the bed being first rocked, and then violently pushed over on one side, accompanied by a rattling of all the crockery. But with the exception of the great historical earthquakes of 1602 and 1692, no earthquakes or hurricanes of any very dangerous strength are recorded in Jamaica, whereas in many of the neighbouring West India Islands hurricanes are of almost yearly occurrence between June and November, and are fearfully destructive to life and property. A well-known doggerel among

mariners in the West Indies is very much to the point, namely :

July, stand by, August, a gust ;
September remember, October all over.

The second earthquake happened about two p.m. and sounded exactly as if an army of four-footed beasts were rushing about overhead, accompanied by a great creaking of the massive beams.

Jamaica has a future, and a great future, first in the cultivation of fruit for export to the United States, to which industry Sir J. P. Grant gave so great an impetus, and secondly, in that of tobacco, for which the soil is especially favourable. Year by year labour becomes scarcer ; Lascars, Coolies, and Kroomen have all been tried and failed—financially ; the Jamaica negro, who is, of course, better than any imported labour, being on the spot and acclimatised, will not work. He can live entirely to his own satisfaction on the wages of two days a week, his wife “finding” herself and the children ; meanwhile the cane rots during the other four days in which he prefers to sit still and do nothing. The women, on the contrary, often work very hard, plodding on, ill or well, with exemplary patience at their task, be it cutting and carrying an enormous bundle of guinea-grass on their head, down a declivity hardly less steep than a stone wall ; be it digging over the family yam-patch, at an angle of forty-five degrees, and conveying the proceeds to market. By cottage-door and mountain-path, men, asleep on their faces, are constantly to be seen reposing from the fatigues of an hour’s work. “Dem well lazy,” exclaimed a smart young black girl, giving each prostrate body a sharp cut with a twig as she passed them, and then looking back at us with a smile that showed all her milk-white teeth at once. Native labour being absolutely unattainable, all cultivation must be carried on under difficulties ; for these reasons, combined with excessive cheapness and competition in the sugar-market, many once rich “Caymans” at Linstead, and other fertile places, have been thrown up. Cuban tobacco-planters, weary of perpetual rebellion and warfare in their own island, have taken these “cane-pieces,” cane no more, brought their labourers over, and planted them with tobacco. It is a well-known fact that only in that part of Cuba immediately contiguous to Havanna is the very best tobacco grown. On that part of the coast of Jamaica immediately opposite Havanna, and

which the shallower soundings show to have once been connected with Jamaica, the same conditions exist, the same humid climate with hot sun, the same coloured earth, about the same irrigation ; it would seem as if it only remained for the same care to be exercised in its cultivation and manipulation when dried, for a new and enormously valuable industry to arise out of the dust, it may be once more to elevate Jamaica into her former prosperous condition among the islands. At present these greatly desired results have not arrived, Jamaica tobacco not obtaining a high price in the market.

When drawing towards the close of my reminiscences, memory seems only to dwell upon our sweet early-morning rambles ; the lovely mountain scenery, which no poor words of mine can adequately describe ; the helpful kindness bestowed upon us in our need by unselfish and noble-hearted people ; the great, cool, old house mellowed and beautified by the passage of a hundred years over its grey roof. I remember those lovely, still, tropical nights, whose profound peace did so much to heal the troubled minds lying under the shadow of a great dread—all our busy and useful life of ceaseless occupation, and again I feel our intense thankfulness when once more restored to the blessings of health. All else has fled into the dim distance, never, however, to be recalled, save with grief and pain.

THE FISHERIES EXHIBITION.

It is a thousand pities that the late Fisheries Exhibition has stirred up such a deal of envy, if not of hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness.

This is what comes of giving prizes. It is astonishing how people will fight one another about a bronze medal. No doubt the Greeks did the same about their crowns of parsley and bay-leaves. If out of twenty competitors nineteen get crowned, the odd man would be sure to move heaven and earth to prove that “somebody” had acted unfairly.

You cannot satisfy everybody. I, for instance, walking the other day in Thanet, between miles of land heavily manured with sprats, could not help blaming the Commissioners for not having invented a way of bringing the fish and the hungry mouths together. Of course they can do nothing ; still, it is a pity. As an East End parson who was with me said, if Government

owned the railways, they might arrange to run up a glut of sprats or herrings and put it into the hands of distributors who should therewith provide a fish-dinner for the children whom we find it necessary to feed at board-schools. But, bless me, what an interference that would be with supply and demand! Better five hundred starvelings should go dinnerless than that one child whose parents can afford to give it a good dinner should get fed for nothing.

I do not think the sixpenny dinner at the Exhibition was a success. The fish was very coarse, but the great want was an army of waiters. Nothing less would have done on the day when I fed there. I should not have fed at all had not a kind policeman taken me round a back way and put me where a very small silver key ensured prompt attention.

What pleased me best was the night view of the place. By day I was always stumbling over coils of rope instead of finding what I was looking for; and I cannot say that the boats of all nations interested me much. My first visit was made early, when some of the most curious things—those from India, for instance, and from the Sandwich Islands—had not yet come; so that there was a good deal of monotony about the thing.

But what of the net result of the Exhibition? Is trawling good or bad, for instance? Does it destroy millions on millions of young soles, or are they only, as some one said, a kind that never grows any bigger and would only eat up the food of the more profitable species? Is the trawl-net a beneficent engine, stirring up the bottom of the sea, as a "scarifier" stirs up a foul bit of ground, and getting rid of useless matter, animal and vegetable, even as that machine gets rid of "twitch"? or does it, on the contrary, carry destruction into the feeding and spawning grounds, as if you were to plough up a good field of clover in order to get at the few potatoes that were remaining from last year's crop? Who can tell? Certainly no one who reads the endless little books which are one chief outcome of the Exhibition. A says one thing, B says just the opposite; and whether A or B is right, who can determine? Again, ought there to be a close time for sea as well as for river fish? Mr. Huxley, the trawlers' friend, loudly and emphatically said, "No." He went in for free-trade in fishing of the most unrestricted kind; and Mr. Huxley is a great authority

—on geology. Most of the practical men were against him (though there was, as we shall see, a grand split in the Canadian camp). I, living not far from the East Anglian Coast, have questioned several Lynn fishermen; and I certainly gathered from them that trawling does cause immense waste of very young cod as well as of other things, and that shrimping is worse still, and has quite ruined what were once good spawning-beds. Will anything come of all this vast amount of fishery literature? Will anybody settle the trawling question? Will anybody stop the pollution of rivers? Will it do any good to have aired all these theories, and to have used up so much paper and printers'-ink, and the nerve-force of so many authors and compositors? One practical question I want to hear about—what is to become of the surplus? Will some of it be used to found a school of observation like that which has been for some time at work at Naples? and would such a school be likely to do any real good or would it degenerate into a means of giving a small income to a few dilettanti? Then there is the great question of breeding coarse fish for poor men's eating. Mr. Blomefield calculated how much the acreage of the small Irish lakes amounts to, and how many pounds of carp they might send weekly to the Manchester market. If carp is really worth breeding (and they would not go in for it so largely in Germany if it were not), why not stock all our ponds, and dig out the stews which yet remain as hollows at the bottom of many an old manor-house garden, especially if the said house is built on the ruins of some abbey? And to do all this, money would be wanted. Even thrifty America keeps a big pond close to the White House, out of which it gives away young carp for stocking. We ought to spend some of the surplus in doing the same, if the thing is worth doing; but my mind misgives me about carp. I never tasted it but once, and then it was detestable. "Fault of cooking." Probably. Our weakness in fish-cookery was forcibly brought out in one of the most interesting of all the papers—that on the Japanese Fisheries, read by Mr. Narinovi Okoshi, with Mr. Sonoda Kokichi in the chair.

The Japanese eat more fish than any other people in the world. With them meat-eating is a foreign innovation, confined to the rich, or rather to those rich people who prefer it to the national diet. Clearly

Mr. Okoshi is not one of these. He was enthusiastic about the excellence of his native fish dinners. He told us that the reason why fish is not more eaten in England, is not because of its price or because of the difficulty of transport, but because we cook it so badly. "To boil it is simply to take away the best part of its flavour; with us there are as many varieties of fish-cooking as there are different kinds of fish."

The Japanese fishing acreage is given at more than half as much again as the tillable area of the islands, and the sea is said to yield seventeen times as much, acre for acre, as the land. Mr. Okoshi, whose facts were taken from Japanese blue-books, seemed rather staggered at the number of fisher-folk—over one and a half million; while in the United Kingdom the men and boys are given at only a hundred and fourteen thousand. He doubted if all were bonâ-fide, even including the sirens in red bathing-dress, who dive for sea-ears and other delicacies. However, as they have a hundred and eighty-seven thousand boats, they need a good-sized army to man them.

They have fish-culture—they have even begun to put fish in tins—but strange to say, they do not seem to breed salmon, which is confined to the northern island, Yezo. Carp and eels and bream are the chief fresh-water fish. In the sea they catch thousands of tons of sardines, for food as well as for manure, and tunnies, and bêche de mer, and octopus. In Mr. Lee's *Sea Monsters Unmasked*, is a picture of a fishmonger's shop in Tokio, with customers buying octopus just as naturally as if it were cod or turbot. Octopus-pots are as regular an institution in Japan as crab-pots in England. The bêche is speared as it lies at the sea bottom, a little oil being thrown on the surface, to help the fisherman's eyes by making the water smooth. Japan did not send over so much to us as she would have done had she not had a national fisheries exhibition of her own this year; but one thing was worth noting—the way in which the nets are dressed with persimmon-juice; it ought to be much cheaper than tanning. In the discussion, the chairman was justly very severe on the old treaties; they were, he said, imposed under pressure, and must be revised. Whether they are or not will depend on the relative strength of "British interests" and British justice. Our merchants will say: "Leave things alone;" our conscience will whisper: "Do

the right thing, and do not delay any longer about it." Mr. Kokichi put it very mildly when he said: "Treaties so concluded naturally lack that equitable character which is essential between friendly powers." In plain English, the Japanese knew nothing of our commercial and other usages, and we made profit out of their ignorance; they were strangers and we took them in.

It takes well-nigh the circuit of the world to bring us from Japan to West Africa, whose fisheries were described by Captain Moloney. It will be news to most that the shrimp-catching at Lagos is almost as important as that round the Nore; and that the "nigger" (always clever in anything relating to cookery) has a way of half-roasting, half-smoking, which may be compared with the making of bloaters. The difference is that bloaters will not keep; whereas a basket of shrimps, dried in the fireplace after being smoked, will go as far as Timbuctoo without getting spoiled.

The need of a close time for river-fish is universally acknowledged. Thanks to its being adopted, we begin to have salmon in rivers whence that king of fish had been exiled since the Hanoverian dynasty came in. But how about sea-fish? We used to read in the old-school science catechisms of the countless number of eggs in a cod's roe. Why protect the cod, or the herring, or the sole, or the mackerel? "Why, indeed?" reply Mr. Huxley and a chorus of savans. "You'll be fools for your pains if you do." One grain of fact, however, is worth more than tons of theory; and, as M. Joncas, the Canadian commissioner, proved, the Canadian banks are suffering from being over-fished. In the Baie des Chaleurs on the St. Lawrence, from Rimouski to Cap Chat, there was a few years ago a cod-fishery on a large scale which has wholly died out. The same with the in-shore fisheries in the Gaspé district. Everywhere the men have to go farther out, because the fish have not been protected when they came in shore to spawn.

And this need of going so far out means the ruin of the small man. It is what keeps back the Irish fisherman on the west coast. For him, in his skin corrach, five miles are the farthest limit of safety. But the fish have been driven far beyond that, and now can only be followed in the big-decked boats of Manxmen or East Anglians. In Canada, likewise, the cheap little boats that used to answer very well are now useless, and the greater cost of boats that

will weather from twenty-five to forty miles of sea has doubled the price of cod. Then, again, so much time is lost owing to the fishing-grounds having been moved so far off. The men are often kept ashore idle; a gale often comes on just as they have got to the grounds; and after a take, instead of being within rowing distance of their market, they must, if becalmed, see their fish spoiled unless they have the luck to ship them on board a steamer.

I said there was a division of opinion in Canada; the Hon. A. W. M'Lellan, Fisheries Minister for the Dominion, and most of the Canadians hold with Dr. Goode Brown, the American fish minister, that protection is needed if the harvest of the sea is to be kept up. Mr. Wilmot was specially hard on Professor Huxley's inaugural address; but the free fishers have a small following even in the Dominion. When I read first one and then the other, each thoroughly proving his own case, I grow almost as muddled as those poor Welshmen who came up by an excursion train, and got so hopelessly drunk on the journey that, when they were landed from the private omnibus, they could do nothing but lie down and go to sleep round the entrance. That certainly was not an edifying result of the Exhibition.

Among the authoritative handbooks is one on "the unappreciated fisher-folk." Unappreciated by whom? I thought everybody knew about the Newhaven fishwives—how they always manage the house and keep the purse; how they are mighty strong, and as handsome as they are strong. Four of them once trotted with a creel full of fish, the twenty-six miles from Dunbar to Edinburgh, in five hours. Sir Walter, who studied them at Auchmithie, saw them rushing into the water to bring their husbands and sons ashore on their shoulders. "You take a dram, I perceive," said he—how had he found that out, I wonder? "Oh, 'deed we dee that, an' we hae muckle need o' 't tee." The bane of the Scotch herring fishermen is the speculative "curer," who supplies sanguine young men who don't like to serve other boatmasters with boat and gear complete; and, then, if the poor fellow has a run of ill-luck, it goes hard with him. If, on the other hand, he has a few of those nights when one boat's load is worth a hundred pounds, he soon clears all off. A few very good takes may be bad for the curer; his salt may run short; he may not have hands enough to keep up with the

gutting, for to get the best brand the herring must be cured the day they are caught.

Boats are much dearer than they were. The open yawls of twenty years ago have given place to decked boats costing some two hundred and seventy pounds a piece; but this is more than made up for in the greater value of the takes. But it is no use having big boats unless you use steam-tugs. A little yawl might be rowed to land, a big one may chance to be becalmed till all the take is spoiled.

One gets an idea of the importance of the fishery when one reads that the nets of the herring fleets that may be seen any night during the season off the Aberdeenshire coast would stretch six times across the North Sea. One boat will often have two miles of nets. As to the gutting, that can be done by an active woman at the rate of two dozen a minute, so that she can fill a barrel—of which more than a million are yearly filled in Scotland—in thirty-five minutes, and the price is fourpence a barrel, except, of course, when there is a glut, and the "gutter" is at a premium. It is in Scotland at herring time as it is in Cornwall when "the huers have sighted fish" (i.e. pilchards): everybody becomes a fisher or a "gutter" for the nonce. Cobblers, gardeners, and their wives and daughters run down to the coast. A crowd of Highlanders and islanders coming to earn "an orra pound or may be twa," add novelty to the scene, and the produce of all this bustle is worth about two and a half millions sterling.

The Yarmouth men are not satisfied with the herring at home. They go off and seek the cod, turbot, sole, etc., in the great North Sea Fishery, though their boats, though a good deal bigger than the Scotch, do not nearly come up to those of Great Grimsby. A Grimsby smack, with all its gear, costs as much as sixteen hundred pounds.

The conservatism of fishermen is shown in the bait they make such a fuss about. The Scotch go in for mussels, sending for them down to the Humber, or round to the Clyde, or even to Hamburg; and the Dutch will have lamperns, for which they send to England; while the herring, a surer bait than either, is comparatively little used.

I am quite sure the Cornish fishers are not unappreciated. The amount that has been written upon "huers," who go to the cliff-tops to look out for shoals, and signal them to the boats below, by waving furze-

bushes, and about seines, and pilchard palaces, and "fair maids," as the fumados (smoked fish) are currently called, is enough to have taught every man, woman, and child in the United Kingdom all about them. Down in the West those uncompromising Cornish Protestants always used to drink "long life to the Pope," because he was supposed to promote the eating of salt fish, and thereby to further their trade. Wages are low in Cornwall—from eight to twelve shillings a week, the master-seamen only getting his weekly guinea and a bonus on every hundredth hogshead. St. Ives is one of the great centres; and there, as more lately in the far north of Scotland, there used to be rows between the local men and the Lowestoft crews about Sunday fishing. The Cornishmen thought it very unfair that their rivals should be able to send off a train-load on Monday morning, while they had to wait till next day.

This "unappreciated fisher-folk" work is provokingly brief about the Chinese fishermen, not finding space even to trot out the familiar cormorant; and it does not say a word about that destructive substitute for fishing which goes on in the Indian paddy-fields. At the monsoon the fields are absolutely "strained" to get the fry, and every irrigation channel has its wicker-work trap; and yet, so exuberant is Nature, that one hears not a word about the supply running short.

One of its suggestions ought certainly to be followed up. Fishermen should insure. They do not as a rule, just as sailors do not learn swimming. It might be done either by a voluntary payment of, say, sixpence a barrel from the herring men, or by a cheap licence, the proceeds of which should form a Government insurance. If forty thousand fishermen paid each five shillings a year, there would be an ample provision against accidents.

As I walked through the Swedish Department, and looked at the long ling-lines and seal-nets, and the great trap-net with arms, and the tangle (pimpeldon), with shiny hooks instead of bait, shown by the Royal Agricultural (Landtbruks) Academy, I remembered the old story in Olaus Magnus, Bishop of Upsaal in 1563, about winter-fishing—breaking, two hundred paces apart, two big holes in the ice, joined by a narrow channel; casting a net into one, and tugging it with cords to the other, out of which it was quickly drawn by men on horseback, who galloped off as soon as the cords were passed to them.

The Danes ought to be practised fishers; but somehow Denmark made a very poor show at South Kensington. Do we still fish the coasts of Iceland as we used to four centuries ago, thereby calling forth remonstrances from the Danish ambassador? It was we, too, who at the very end of the sixteenth century found, and for fourteen years kept to ourselves, a splendid Greenland fishing-ground, "a gold mine," our old writers call it, the ore being whales. By-and-by we had to let in Danes, and Dutch, and French; and our own trade came to nothing.

Let any one who cares for the literature of fishing, and how Isis was worshipped as a fish-tailed woman, and how Ælian talks of fly-fishing, and of tickling trout, and how Oppian got his father restored from banishment by reciting his *Haliæutics* before Emperor Severus, and how Charles the Fifth visited the tomb of Will Belkinson, the Englishman who in the fourteenth century taught the Dutch how to pickle herrings, look into Mr. Manley's *Handbook* and that by Mr. Davenport Adams. He will learn that about one hundred and forty years ago there was a company for carrying fish by postchaise from the south coast to London, the cost for the seventy-two miles being four pounds five shillings for half a ton, and the time twelve hours. He will learn that in Japan the salmon is the type of perseverance, and when a boy is born, a paper salmon, so constructed that the wind swells it into proper roundness, is put on the house-top. By-and-by it is taken and kept among the household gods (like a French peasant-girl's wedding wreath); and whenever the boy wants a talking to, he is bidden to meet the trials of life in a salmon-like way. I wonder if the boys on trawlers' smacks, who so easily tip overboard while they are baling up water (see that sad *Rising Sun* case), look on the salmon as their pattern; by all accounts they need something to keep the heart alive in them. Careless as we are of our fisher-boys, we were always careful of our fisheries. Edgar, fond of high sounding titles—*Altitonantis Dei largifluente clementia*—claimed to be Basileus, not only of the English but also of all the ocean and whatever therein is. When the English shipping used to be summoned out through fear of French invasion, the east-coast fishermen were specially exempted. Henry the Seventh ordered that for every sixty-eight acres of tillage one rod shall be sown with

flax or hemp for cordage. Our poets have not forgotten the gentle craft. Du Bartas, and Drayton of the Polyolbion, are hardly poets; but they are only two in a list which begins with Chaucer and includes Gay, who tells us that not caring

Around the hook the tortured worm to twine,
he preferred

To cast the feathered hook,
And with the fur-wrought fly delude the prey.

Not much more than two hundred years ago, Gilbert published his Angler's Delight, containing, The Method of Fishing in Hackney Marshes, and bids piscator go to the Flower de Luce, at Clapton, "where, whilst you are drinking a pot of ale, they will make you two or three pennyworth of paste for ground-bait. They do it very neatly and well," he adds; and here are the ingredients: "Of Man's Fat, Cat's Fat, Heron's Fat, and of the best Assa-fœtida, of each two drams; mummy finely powdered, two drams; cummin-seed, two scruples; and of camphor, galbanum, and Venice turpentine of each one dram; civet grains two. Treat it as a jewel, for 'tis unguentum piscatorum mirabile."

As amusing as any of these handbooks is Mr. Lee's Sea Monsters Unmasked, which sums up all that has been written about the Krake, since Bishop Pontoppidan copied Olaus Magnus, who had somehow heard the tradition of the living island that so suddenly went down to the confusion of Sindbad and his company. Pontoppidan says the Krake is a polype—he is clearly describing a sort of octopus. Mr. Lee gives dozens of cases of men pulled under by octopi, cases which show that Victor Hugo was not at all wrong with his pieuvre that people laughed at so much. The Japanese eat these monsters—see a cut by a native artist of a Tokio fish-monger's shop; though the companion picture of a boat attacked by a huge octopus, shows that the polypes are sometimes able to return the compliment. The sea-serpent appears to be another huge polype, the calamary, which has a beak and retractile claws instead of suckers at the end of its thong-like tentacles. Mr. Lee gives pictures of all the sea-serpents, from those figured by Olaus Magnus, to that seen from Her Majesty's yacht in 1877, and leaves us in doubt whether all these can have been "squids" (calamaries), or whether we must suppose that some of the vast saurians of the Lyme Regis beds are still alive.

Mr. Lee, too, goes through the history

of mermen and mermaids, from Dagon as he is found at Nineveh, and Hea (Noah) at Khorsabad, down to the Japanese or Malay artificial mermaids, which used to be shown when I was a boy, and are still found, I believe, in Mr. Barnum's collection.

Mr. Lee thinks the Lernean hydra was an octopus (the octopus will come to be as generally useful in fish lore as the sun is in comparative mythology), and he corrects two "vulgar errors." Whales do not spout through their blow-holes the water which they have taken in through their mouths—whatever water there may be in a whale's "blow" is only condensed vapour. The paper nautilus does not sail on the surface—is but a female octopus with a portable nest, which serves to protect her head as she crawls along the bottom.

This is all very well, but really a Fisheries Exhibition ought to do a great deal more than give occasion for scores of neat little books, some of which tell old stories in a lively way, some are full of forgotten fish-lore, ancient and mediæval, while others discuss, "burning questions" about the culture, and catching, and transport of fishes, but without settling anything. One looks to a national affair of this kind to set some of these moot questions at rest. Perhaps our Exhibition may help to do so by-and-by as its real results come to be better ascertained.

YEARNING.

OVER the west the glory dies away,
Faint rose flecks gleaming in the darkening sky;
And the low sounds that mark the close of day,
Rise up from wood and upland—rise and die;
Soft silence falls o'er meadow, hill, and grove,
And in the hush I want you, oh, my love.
In the gay radiance of the morning hour,
In the warm brooding glory of the noon,
When man and Nature, in their prime of power,
With the day's fulness blend in eager tune;
The rush of life forbids the pulse to move,
That now, in yearning passion, wants you, love.
Wants you to watch the crimson glow and fade,
Through the great branches of the broadening
lime;
Wants you, to feel the soft grey quiet shade,
Lap the tired world in blessed eventime;
Wants you to whisper: "Come, your power to
prove,
The gloaming needs its angel, come, my love."

ROBIN Y REE.

A STORY

HARK! there it was again, that strange melody, floating over the silent sea and moorland, and falling on the ear as softly as thistledown. It was one of the old songs of the country, perhaps sung by

some fisherman as he walked homeward through the autumn twilight with his empty creel on his back and money in his pocket. The singer was invisible, but the words were these :

Red top-knots and ribbons of green thou'lt wear,
If, sweet little Betsy, with me thou'lt pair,
Robin the king, Robin the king ridlan.*

The prevailing stillness made it difficult to say whether the words came from far or near. The breeze was too slight to stir the bracken, and the peat-smoke hung in motionless wreaths over the cottage chimneys in the glen, and the clouds of tiny butterflies that had flitted over the gorse and heather during the daytime had mysteriously vanished at sunset. The conies were awake, no doubt, but they prudently kept out of sight. The curlews were asleep among the turnips, the grey plover were away on the hillside, and down yonder among the cliffs the gulls, and gannets, and guillemots were standing in long white rows.

But if the solemn night was voiceless, it had a wonderful charm of its own, though the moon was yet to emerge like some gilded dragon-fly from its slumber beneath the waters. The air was laden with the freshness of the sea and the perfume of the moorland flowers ; the sky was a deep undappled blue, to which the countless stars flickering in its dome imparted a vastness immeasurably greater than that of the sunlit day ; immediately overhead lay Yn Raad Mooar Ree Ghorree,† the Great Road by which King Orry brought his yellow-bearded Norsemen to the coast of Man ; and at its northern extremity a pinkish glow was now advancing and now receding, afraid of invading the realm of night, yet unwilling to leave a scene of so much beauty. Away to the south, beyond a great sweep of tranquil water, broken only by the spear-points of the stars, a dense mist was winding around the bays and headlands, and as it drew aside for a moment there came from its midst the bright flash of a lighthouse ; but elsewhere

the atmosphere was so clear that the rocks stood out in bold relief, their shadows assuming all manner of fantastic shapes.

In the background the hills cut into the blue sky like a row of enormous shark's-teeth, and after sweeping past fields of corn and clover with many a cosy little homestead nestling among the trees, they at last arrived at this wild spot where gorse and heather and bracken tumbled into a deep glen, and then spread out on either hand into a sheet of gold, and brown, and purple, studded with an occasional boulder, as if to prevent the wind from blowing it away. A couple of hundred yards farther down, the moorland terminated suddenly in a perpendicular wall of schist that dropped into the sea many hundred feet below, but parted in the centre as if it had been cleft with a mighty hatchet. A few thatched, whitewashed cottages crouched upon the sides of the glen, for the wind sometimes blew such a shrill blast down that narrow channel that it was necessary to take advantage of the little shelter to be found there. In the ferny depths there was a glisten of silver, and a keen ear might have detected the babble of the brook as it hurried seawards.

Except for the invisible singer, the whole world seemed to be asleep, and the stars looked down upon an unbroken solitude. Presently the voice went on :

Red top-knots and ribbons of black thou'lt wear ;
I'll make thee Queen of the May, I swear.
Robin the king, Robin the king ridlan.

The words had scarcely died away when two figures mounted the steep side of the glen and slowly made their way towards the cliffs. The one was a tall, handsome, well-dressed man with a brown beard ; the other a woman, young and beautiful. He was the first to break the silence.

"Elsie, I've been thinking—thinking very seriously of asking you to marry me."

"Me marry you !" She had stopped suddenly to stare at him, her dark eyes brimful of astonishment, a warm flush on her brown cheeks, which were partly shaded by long black hair flowing around her shapely shoulders, and her hands clasped in front of her. Standing there in the midst of the heather, she looked like a startled fawn. "Me marry you, Mr. Graham !" she repeated, weighing out the words one by one as if to get at their meaning that way.

"You shouldn't say 'Me marry you!'" he said with a slight shiver. "You should say, 'I marry you!' And it would be nicer

* This old Manx song, which used to be very popular on May Day, is given in the original language in the valuable series of works published by the Manx Society for its subscribers some years ago. It is of such great antiquity that the peasantry have no tradition concerning the peculiar head-dress referred to. The refrain is as follows :

Robin y Ree, Robin ye Ree ridlan.
Aboo, Aban ! Fal dy ridlan.
Aboo, Aban ! Robin y Ree.

"Aboo, Aban !" was probably part of a form of incantation.

† The Milky Way.

if you were to substitute Robin for Mr. Graham, which has an abominably formal sound between such great friends of quite two months' standing. Thus corrected, the sentence runs, 'I marry you, Robin!' to which Robin replies, 'Why not?'

It is doubtful whether she fully appreciated this singular mixture of teaching and wooing; indeed, it is doubtful whether she even understood it.

"'Tis only a poor fisher-girl I am," she answered, "and 'tis you that are a grand gentleman, with money, and lands, and houses, so the neighbours tell me. Oh, but it would be a strange thing for me to marry you, Mr. Graham."

Womanlike she glanced from his fine clothes to her own humble garb—a coarse grey dress of homespun wool, a blue shawl crossed over her breast and fastened at her waist, and a kind of sun-bonnet. In this respect the disparity between them was sufficiently obvious, though it would have been hard to match the girl's graceful figure or beautiful face.

"I am not acting in haste to repent at leisure," said Robin Graham with deliberation. "Some arguments may be urged against our marriage, I admit; but as they all spring from an accident—the accident of birth—they can be easily brushed aside. And then, Elsie, the sacrifice won't be altogether on my side. Oh no! you'll have something to give up too. You see, I've thought the matter well over."

He paused and looked at her, as if he had asked her a question; but she was too astonished to speak; this wonderful thing, that he wished her to marry him, quite stupefied her. So he went on:

"Fine ladies are all very well for a time, but a man gets tired of them—tired of their fine feathers, and their fine speeches, and their fine ways. That sort of thing is taking in the show-room, but inexpressibly wearisome in the house. There's not an ounce of sincerity in a ton of such stuff. No, there is nothing like a quiet, domestic life: a pleasant, humdrum husband, and a cheerful, chatty wife to make tea and sew on buttons, and do things generally. You could manage that, Elsie?"

"Oh yes, Mr. Graham," she exclaimed, her dark eyes wide-open with surprise; "and I'm thinking old Kitty Corkill could do that for you." The words touched rather a discordant note, but the voice was singularly sweet, having learnt its cadences from the winds and waves.

"Well, well; never mind about Kitty

Corkill. She is old and ugly, and you are neither the one nor the other. Which is it to be, Elsie, yes, or no?"

And now from across the heather came the last sad words of the song, but so softly that neither of these two heard it.

Oh, sweet little Betsy, thou'rt breaking my heart,
Courting Robin the king, they say thou art,
Robin the king, Robin the king ridlan.

When the invisible singer ceased, the dark hills seemed to grow darker, and a gloom to fall over the undulating moorland and the wide sea beyond, though the sky still remained starry and cloudless. Elsie, perceiving that the "merry dancers" had vanished, could not repress a little shudder, but she was soon absorbed in the contemplation of the bright prospect suddenly opened out before her.

She saw a beautiful picture of fairyland, for it was quite impossible to imagine its existence in real life. Wild hilly coast scenery is fruitful in marvels; but set a man down in the middle of a plain and he would suppose the earth to be flat, and life a monotonous level track along it. Here, in this lonely glen, the whole air was full of mystery; the tales that the old folk told around their cottage-fires after nightfall were of things and beings invisible to dull citizens. There was Ben Varrey, the mermaid, who, before every great festival, imparted to her jewels new brilliancy by setting them in the wave-tops, and there they might be seen flashing in the sunlight, while the syrens sang bewitching melodies to entice mortals away from them. Who had not heard of the splendid city, with its gilded towers and minarets, which that mighty magician, Fin MacCoul, had sunk beneath the waves off Port Soderic? Though he had transformed its inhabitants into blocks of granite, yet curiously enough they were summoned to church regularly every Sunday, for the sailors often heard the tinkling of the bell; and the whole island rose to the surface once every seven years, and would remain above water if only one could see it and lay a Bible upon it. And beneath Castle Rushen was there not a wonderful race of giants, who drank out of golden goblets, and wore magnificent clothes, and whose suburban retreat was illuminated by a reckless profusion of wax-candles? This was incontestable, for an adventuresome mortal had interviewed one of them, and the giant, after asking how things were going on in the upper regions, had crushed up a ploughshare as easily as if it had been a filbert, and then

said pleasantly: "There are still men in the Isle of Man." Why, Elsie had seen with her own eyes in Kirk Malew a chalice which had been carried off from an elfin banquet. And with such wonders she had to fashion her picture.

First of all, there was to be a house twice as large as her father's thatched cottage in the glen; the crockery on the dresser was to be replaced by silver plates, like those used for collecting in churches on grand occasions; the brass candlesticks upon the mantelpiece were to make way for gold ones; the stone floor would be hidden beneath a gorgeous carpet; the deal tables and chairs must go—something of dark wood like the old Dutch clock would look better; outside there should be a handsome porch and a garden, and geraniums in the window, and no split congors hanging against the walls; and in the midst of all this grandeur would be Elsie herself, dressed in silk and bedecked with jewels, like Ben Varrey, and doing nothing all day long but sitting in an armchair, and ordering her servants about. As this splendid vision passed through her brain, her dark eyes flashed with delight, and half unconsciously she swept the long black hair from her beautiful face, to make herself look more like the vicar's daughter, whose hair was fastened behind.

Herrings for dinner to-day; herrings yesterday; herrings to-morrow. There would be no more herrings, thought Elsie; the barrel would vanish from the corner of the room, and, instead, she would dine upon bacon and beef, and delicacies of every kind. Good-bye to amvlass (butter-milk and water), sollaghan (a kind of porridge), braghtan (a sandwich of buttered oatcake, potatoes, and herrings), and binjeau (curds); instead of these she would fare as if every day were a Sunday-school feast, and she would have plenty of jough (beer) for her father and the neighbours. Oh yes, her enjoyment was not to be wholly selfish. There was to be a chair for her father by the chimney-corner, and tobacco in plenty, and he was to sit there and smoke from morning till night; and the neighbours were to come in for some share of her comforts. For some, she would purchase their winter stock of herrings; for others, she would pay men to cut and stack their peat; and for others whose nets had been carried away, she would buy new ones. You see, Elsie's notion of paradise was smiling idleness, tempered by a little well-directed kindness.

It would be interesting to learn how many have noticed a singular omission from her reflections. Among the fair sex, probably not one. The idea of love for the man who had asked her to marry him had never entered Elsie's head. She regarded him as a convenient sort of fairy who could supply her with an illimitable number of good things; and this stirred her fancy rather than her avarice, as it would have done with better educated girls. Robin Graham was too high above her for her to think of loving him; she might have worshipped him, but love him—no, that was quite impossible. She felt that he belonged to some entirely different order of beings from herself; and though he was well fitted to be the centre ornament of the magnificent scene she had depicted, she could not bring herself to think of him as a flesh-and-blood husband.

But in all this golden amber, it must be confessed that there was a very inappropriate fly, Joe Quilliam by name, and the question was, not how did he get there, but how to get him out. He was a plain, simple-minded fisherman, a good deal older than Elsie, but without doubt desperately in love with her. There was no actual pledge between them. His natural bashfulness had prevented him from declaring himself, and he had not been goaded into doing so by the hateful presence of a rival; while she had had no need to question her own heart—a species of catechism that the dilatory fair sex seldom resorts to until the last moment. Probably she was, as she believed, heart-whole; for this curious organ is very like a "Rupert's drop"—hard and obdurate as iron until it is touched upon one particular spot, when it undergoes a sudden and irreparable transformation. In Elsie's case this catastrophe had not yet happened. She had listened attentively to all that the fisherman had to say, and she had occasionally chaffed him about his want of success with the lobsters or the congors; but this surely is not a very advanced stage of love-making, and, beyond accepting a few bright ribbons from him last Hollandtide Eve, she had given him no definite encouragement.

So far, all well and good. But, unfortunately, Joe Quilliam was rather a hot-tempered fellow, with a disagreeably plain way of speaking his mind, and there was no knowing what he might do or say when he heard that she was going to marry the fine gentleman, Robin Graham. It may

appear strange that she should consider him in this matter at all, but she did ; she even tried to devise some scheme for benefiting him. This unreasonable fellow would be angry, she knew ; he would refuse to take anything at her hands ; he might even refuse to speak to her. There really seemed no way of managing him. What was she to do ?

By this time they had reached the end of the moorland. They had walked in silence through the heather, and were now standing upon one of the great black headlands that flanked the entrance to the glen, where the rivulet widened and ran smoothly over the glistening sand to meet the wavelets. Close beside them, and upon the very verge of the cliffs, a large boulder was poised so that it seemed as if the slightest touch would hurl it into the water many hundred feet below. It had been deeply cut and furrowed by icebergs, but the ferns and lichens growing thickly upon it gave it a rounded appearance in the twilight, though there was a sharply-defined shadow at its farther side. The rocky ledges upon the face of the perpendicular cliff were white with sea-birds, and a drowsy murmur came up from the caverns at its base. Away among the bracken in the glen there might occasionally be seen a gleam from some cottage-window, but not often, for the lights are carefully guarded by the fisher-folk along the coast, lest they should lure an unwary vessel to destruction. Not a moving thing was in sight ; not even a ship upon that peaceful sea. The lighthouse had long disappeared in the gathering mist towards the south. But at such a time, when all is lifeless, inanimate objects have a strange way of becoming lifelike ; the winds acquire human speech, and the stars sight, and the very hills bend forward in an attitude of anxious watching and listening. In Elsie's case this feeling was so strong that she drew a little nearer to Robin for protection.

"Well, Elsie, will you marry me?" he asked, taking both her hands in his and looking straight into her dark eyes.

"I—I don't know."

Surely the shadow on the farther side of the boulder started ! And it might have been the wind, or it might have been fancy, but there certainly seemed to be sighed out in a low voice full of such mournful pathos :

"Oh, sweet little Betsy, thou'rt breaking my heart ;
Courtin' Robin the king the way thou art."

Both were too engaged to notice this singular phenomenon ; indeed, Robin Graham was rather staggered at Elsie's answer.

"You don't know !" he exclaimed in an aggrieved tone. "Come, Elsie, what do you mean ? You know I'm very fond of you, and I hoped you were fond enough of me to marry me ; but if you're not—well, I've made a mistake, that's all."

"Listen—oh, listen, Mr. Graham," she cried in sudden terror.

"Merely a rabbit."

"Oh, but it's no rabbit. It's the boagane that's about, I'm sure. Let's away ! Oh, do ! let's make haste back, for it's neither a bollen cross nor a dreain's feather that I have."

"You really must get rid of such absurd notions," said Robin, who felt keenly that ignorance in a wife would be bad enough, but that superstition would be quite unbearable. "At your age, Elsie, you ought to know that boaganes are 'gone extinct' ; civilisation has drowned them, every one ; in fact, they never existed anywhere but in the imaginations of silly old wom—I mean, of those who didn't know any better. And how on earth could a miserable fishbone or a wren's feather protect you from harm ? It's sheer nonsense. Oh, I'm not blaming you, but those who put such folly into your innocent head ; they ought to be ashamed of themselves."

She was more astonished now than when he had asked her to marry him, and in her indignation she forgot all about the sound that had startled her. Drawing her hands away from him, she stepped back a little, and with her dark eyes flashing and her head thrown back, she looked more like a beautiful queen than a simple fisher-girl. The feeling that bids us cherish what our fathers have cherished, is akin to parental instinct ; it was very strong in Elsie. What did this stranger mean by saying that there were no such things as boaganes, when their existence was known to persons of the meanest intelligence, even to Black Barney, the idiot. The ignorance of the man was pitiful ! Why, the Phynnoderee was quite a well-known character in Rushen, where he mowed hay-fields and corn-fields, and sometimes tossed boulders about by way of a change, and the boulders might be seen as proof positive of his existence. Was not the spectre-hound seen nightly in Peel Castle ? And was it not matter of notoriety that "Dame Eleanor Cobham, Gloucester's wife," haunted the same place ? But there was no need to go

beyond the glen itself; it was full of goblins. The waterbull, the glashtyn, and the nightsteed had been seen by many old enough to believe their own eyes; and as for the horrible groans of these noisy spirits, on a winter's night it was not safe to go out of doors—at any rate, without the protection of a chaplet of bollan-feailleoin.* And yet this stranger had the impudence to say that it was all nonsense, that boaganes were a myth!

"Oh, but I've heard them, Mr. Graham," said Elsie.

"You heard the wind, Elsie."

"And I've seen them, too."

"You thought so, Elsie, but you were wrong: You could not see what does not exist."

"It's all very well for you as hasn't seen them to say they don't exist; but it's other people that have seen them, and they know that there are boaganes everywhere."

Here was an awkward stumbling-block. To marry a woman who believed in goblins did seem outrageous. Every night she might be putting out bowls of water for them to drink, and laying dust on the floor to observe their footsteps in the morning, and then brushing it carefully from the door toward the hearth lest a whole houseful of good luck should be swept away. There would be no doing anything for fear of offending these ridiculous spirits.

Robin Graham had decided upon attempting a very dangerous thing—nothing more or less than an experiment in matrimony. He really had become somewhat tired of the trammels and ways of the society in which his life had been spent, and he had grown so fond of Elsie that he had determined to marry and educate her. The same thing had been done before, why not again? About three months before this time he had come to the glen for the purpose of fishing, and he had taken and furnished a picturesque little cottage. He had been thrown much into Elsie's company; she had helped him with his boat and his lines, and she had shown him the best places to go to for cod, and whiting, and mackerel. In this way their acquaintance had progressed rapidly, until it had reached the present stage. He was sure that she was good and beautiful; what more could he want in a wife? Of course it would be useless to think of raising her to his level; it would be equally useless to

think of descending to hers; but surely somewhere between there must exist a platform on which they could meet on equal terms. Compromise is the very essence of a happy married life; Robin Graham had resolved to put this principle into practice without delay. He had studied the simple habits of the people about, and he was quite convinced that the thing was practicable, though perhaps not without some little friction at first. This evening, however, two or three trifles such as Elsie's grammar had jarred rather painfully upon his susceptibilities, but nothing so much as this revelation about her superstition. She had displayed, too, an unexpected amount of obstinacy; in the interest of her education, this had to be eradicated at once.

"Elsie, your charms would be just as useful to you as a straw to a drowning man. Such notions are out of date; they belong to the days of witchcraft and nonsense; I assure you they would make you ridiculous in soci—among educated people. And as for these preposterous boaganes, you must give up believing in them—you really must. There never were such things, and I'll prove it to you."

Though he had adopted the foolish device of trying to strengthen his case by a mere assertion, Elsie was so strong in her convictions, that she refrained from attacking him at his weak point. She said simply:

"It's Joe Quilliam that has told me about them many a time. Oh, and I believe him too."

"What can an ignorant fisherman know about such matters?"

"Or an ignorant fisher-girl either, Mr. Graham?"

This harsh classification of his intended wife with an awkward common lout of a fisherman was exceedingly objectionable. Like many others, he considered himself vastly superior to every woman in his own rank of life, but he looked upon the women on a lower rung of the social ladder as much superior to the men. Somehow or other, these two opinions had never been brought into juxtaposition in his own mind; if they had been, perhaps he might have been able to reconcile them, conflicting though they seem. The very idea that this beautiful girl belonged to the same class as that rough fellow, Joe Quilliam, was enough to make one shudder. Robin Graham hastened to repudiate it.

"Joe Quilliam is all very well in his way, no doubt," he said; "but——"

* Mugwort.

The shadow emerged from the far side of the boulder, and took the shape of a tall, powerful-looking fisherman, in knee-boots and blue guernsey. He had a pleasant, open face, though its expression was half-sad and half-angry as he advanced towards the couple on the edge of the cliff.

"You here, Joe?" exclaimed Elsie in evident alarm. Even this annoyed Robin.

"What does it matter?" he asked. "Listeners never hear any good of themselves, and Quilliam is no exception to the rule."

"Aw, I'm here plainly enough, an' you may say I came to listen if it suits you, Mr. Graham," said Quilliam; "but this I know, that it wasn't my own doin' at all, an' I thought it better to keep quiet than to be disturbin' Elsie by sneakin' off—anyway, until you began for to speak o' me, and then it was best to come out for sure."

Elsie gave him a timid little smile of thanks.

"That was very thoughtful of you, Joe," she murmured.

"And now I want to come to a plain un'erstan'in' with you, Elsie," Quilliam went on. "It's not for me to deny that I haven't heard what you've been sayin' between yourselves, for I have—an' it's vexed me more than enough. An' first of all let me have my say about the boaganes, which this larned gentleman here comin' from England where they know so much, though they live in towns for all that, says is all nonsense. Tut! any fool with eyes and ears in his head—and that's not much to ask for him, I reckon—could talk of boaganes that he has heard—aye, an' seen, too, by the hunnerd. It's on'y this very night—an' it's solemn truth I'm tellin' you—as I sat watchin' for the Mary Jane, which is about due, I saw a great black thing rear itself out of the water just inside o' the tideway yonner, an' it looked aroun' an' gave a ter'ble moan, an' then sank again, an' I saw no more of it; an' on'y for my bollar cross here, I'd ha' run for the glen, for it was somethin' dreadful."

This horrible picture wrought upon Elsie's imagination to such an extent that she uttered a slight scream; whereupon the fisherman, hastily disengaging the fish-bone that was tied round his neck, handed it to Elsie, who took it eagerly. He shot a triumphant glance at Robin; but Robin was unequal to the occasion—he could only laugh contemptuously. To put himself in opposition to this ignorant fellow.

and run the risk of failure, was what he wished to avoid at all hazards; unfortunately, however, it was forced upon him in a very unpleasant way.

"Maybe, you'll remember last Hollantide Eve, Elsie," continued Quilliam. "Anyway those ribbons round your neck will help bring it to your mind. It was for a pledge that I gave them to you, though I am so stupid at talkin' that I held my tongue foolishly. Surely, Elsie, you knew I was madly fond of you, and your sweet face, and your pretty ways—surely, surely. Aw, but it's a poor, plain, awkward fellow that I am to think of such as you; an' likely enough if it hadn't been for the ould proverb, 'Black as the raven is, he'll find a mate,' which I kept repeatin' an' repeatin' to myself continually, I would never have foun' the courage to look up to you, beautiful thing that you are. There's one here, though, that's not so backward at all; an' now the question is, Which is it to be? for one or other it must be, an' it's for you to decide this very night. Heaven help thee, my Elsie! an' Heaven help me, too, if you turn your back upon me this night; but if so be—well, I'll take ship in some ocean-goin' vessel, an' never trouble you more, so you needn't fear at all, but just give your answer straight."

And he stood like a soldier on parade, though the quivering about his mouth looked strangely pathetic in that brown, weather-worn face.

Here was a horrible catastrophe! It had been a lovely picture: Elsie with her pretty face and dark eyes and flowing black hair, with the still water glistening at the base of the bluff precipice whitened with sea-birds, and the heather all around her, and the stars shining overhead, and the rivulet deep down in the ferny glen. And suddenly there had come into it a discordant element, this rudely-clad fellow with his awkward speech and ungainly ways, and all its beauty had vanished. Robin Graham was at once disgusted and indignant; disgusted at being brought into rivalry with a rough fisherman, indignant at this fisherman's impertinence in aspiring to Elsie's hand, and in placing him in such an undignified position. It is needless to say that this last consideration had the most weight with him. But how was he to extricate himself from this unpleasant dilemma? That he and Joe Quilliam should be matched against one another for Elsie's hand would be a lifelong disgrace. even should he prove

successful ; to be rejected in the presence of his humble rival would be simply intolerable ; and to withdraw from this disagreeable contest would be construed into an acknowledgment of defeat. Clearly, he could neither advance nor retreat, nor even remain where he was without encountering disaster. It was difficult to discover the least of the evils presented for his selection.

Meanwhile, Elsie stood silent between the two men. Holding the bollen cross in her hand, she kept glancing from one to the other, and then down into the picturesque glen where she had spent her simple life among the bracken and the heather and the gorse. There were boaganes there, no doubt, for they love the peat-smoke and the moorland flowers, and they revel in the babbling brook and the sparkling waves. There her father lived, and there her grandfather had lived and her ancestors for many centuries, and if their lives had been uneventful except for the perils of the sea, they had not been unhappy. Was she to break away from all these old traditions and become a great lady ? or was she to continue in the peaceful groove that had been so pleasant to her fathers ? Which of these two ? Oh, that some fairy would help her in this distressing situation !

No sooner had she conceived this wish than there was a swift rush of something black through the air. It was immediately followed by the pitiful squeal of some creature in agony. They all turned, and saw on a hillock, a few yards distant, a young rabbit in the clutch of a hawk, which had swooped down upon the over-venturesome little ball of wool before it could take refuge in its burrow. Robin Graham regarded the scene with curiosity. It was new to him, and he was wondering whether the hawk would proceed to devour its prey then and there, or whether it would carry it off bodily in its talons. But Elsie was deeply moved.

"Oh, do save the poor little thing !" she cried.

Pride kept Robin motionless; even now he was determined to hold aloof from any appearance of rivalry. But three rapid strides carried the fisherman to the spot. The great bird relinquished its prey, and rose slowly in the air ; while, apparently none the worse for its adventure, the rabbit scampered off and tumbled into its hole.

"Oie vie,* Mr. Graham," said Elsie in

* Good-night.

her stateliest manner. Her use of the Manx expression made her meaning sufficiently clear. Without another word she walked across to Joe Quilliam and put her hand in his, and together they went away through the heather and vanished in the glen.

As for Robin Graham, the lesson was useful, though galling in the extreme. Sitting alone upon the cliff he thought the matter over, and at length admitted that worse might have befallen him. But it was decidedly unpleasant to hear the voice of his successful rival singing out merrily in the distance :

"Red top-knots and ribbons of black thou'lt wear ;
I'll make thee Queen of the May, I swear.
Robin y Ree, Robin ye Ree ridlan."

AN UNFINISHED TASK.

A STORY IN FOUR CHAPTERS. CHAPTER III.

PROBABLY Mr. Leslie had never been the owner of so much wealth in all his life. But there it lay before him—a banker's draft for three hundred pounds, and a letter from his brother in the colonies to say that it was some return for his kindness and protection to the writer's children.

"Now that is very good of Charles," he said. "Poor fellow ! the world is using him better at last. I am glad, too, for the little ones—for Amy and Kate."

It would have been but natural if the Rev. Norman had been glad also for himself. There was no reason why he should have taken entire charge of his brother's motherless children ; but then he did many things for which there was no reason save the promptings of his own kind heart. Certainly there were many relatives much better able to aid Charles Leslie, when extravagance and rash speculation compelled him to cross the seas ; but the vicar was elder brother ; he held the family living, and might be regarded as head, in which capacity everything unpleasant was by general consent relegated to him.

"Yes, I am glad," he repeated. "Just at this time, too. But, oh dear, this other affair is very sad ! I scarcely know how to break it to poor Grace. Is it only money that she is losing ? Nay. I will not think of the other. It cannot be true."

This other affair was a portentous legal-looking document. He had read and re-read it many times. Each time it seemed more hopeless and confusing, and so he laid it aside and took—it was the vicar's

usual anodyne for tribulation—a fishing-rod and his way across the moor.

“It has been a capital season,” so ran his soliloquy as, reaching his favourite stream, he made ready his tackle. “How early they began, too! Why, that was quite a good take which young Langridge brought me when—when——” The vicar paused a moment, and then with an effort, as if he would school himself to the stern reality: “When Grace promised to be his wife. Ah me! little more than six months ago. And it seems so long—so long.”

A light motion of his practised hand. The line went circling through the air, and the delusive flies were on the water, whilst this disciple of the “gentle Izaak,” all his sorrows forgotten for a while, watched them keenly and in vain. So one hour passed, and another, and yet another, and not a single trout vouchsafed a glance at the tempting offer.

“There must be something wrong in the weather,” he surmised, angler like never at a loss for a reason.

But beyond doubt something was wrong with the weather. The moorland, which had been glowing so lately under the autumnal sun, was disappearing in a dense colourless mist. There was a stillness in the air, an oppressive silence, save when the wind came and went with a wailing sigh. No bird sang. The very hum of the insects ceased. There was not a sound save the murmur of the brook, and that seemed whispering weird secrets. Nature itself seemed mute, waiting in hushed silence for that awful voice whose low utterances were coming nearer, growing louder, amidst the purple blackness overshadowing the sky, and in this gathering ominous gloom the vicar of Stanton Pomrey turned to find himself not alone as a horseman reined up by his side.

“What, Mr. Langridge! You might be one of the children of the mist, you ride so swiftly; and heather and moss make no sound.”

The young man dismounted, and grasped the other’s outstretched hand. With each was an attempt at cordiality, and with each was failure.

“Yes; the Duchess carries me well. She is very restless to-day, though.”

“Doubtless the poor brute thinks it is time to see about home. There is a storm impending. I suppose you come from the vicarage, Cuthbert, and from Grace? As I reached the water. I saw you in the

distance. There was a distance then.” As the mist gathered more closely around them.

“I come from the vicarage, sir; not from Miss Luttrell. I purposed to see her, but I have not done so. And, as I was seeking you, Mrs. Pryor charged me with this mackintosh.”

“It was very good of Aunt Pryor. And I am thankful to you also,” said the vicar, as he put it on. “But it was a chance that you found me. And you have come out of your way too.”

“Not much, sir,” replied the other; “I can make for home round under Cheale Tor. It is rough, but I am used to the moor. I desired to see you. I would rather we met here than at home, near Grace. There! I want to say it and I hesitate—even as I rode to see her, and was cowardly enough to be glad she was from home.” Then, with quick abruptness: “Mr. Leslie, do you think that Grace loves me?”

“That is a strange question to put here, and with such weather coming, too,” as two or three big rain-drops fell sullenly. The vicar only spoke for time—time to still one throb of his heart. He went on: “Do I think so? No—I know it.”

He looked at the young man steadily. The vicar was used to read faces, more eloquent than words, and he added:

“Why do you put that question to me? Have you heard anything? Are you come to own yourself unworthy of her? Have you wearied so soon?”

“I am unworthy of her. I own it with shame. Not weary—do not misjudge me, Mr. Leslie. I love Grace Luttrell this day as fondly as ever. Yet am I here to say the thing may not be. Will you not help me in this, to me, bitter confession? Have you heard nothing, sir?”

“Yes, I have, and dismissed it as idle rumour. You see, Mr. Langridge,” and there was cold scorn in each accent, “thinking well of your honour, valuing it more highly than you do, I would not credit the news. I heard you were often with a lady—well, a little advanced in years, old enough, in fact, to be your mother. I heard it, when I was last in London. I would not question you on the matter—deemed it but mere gossip. I heard of Miss Perryman—and her wealth.”

“And you heard truly, sir; but the tale was incomplete. It should have told you of my father’s lands, each acre mortgaged—of the poverty of Pomrey Hold; of my

mother, and my sisters, their prayers to me—the one who can aid them.”

“With what result? Is a mean, dastardly action the less so because more than one is engaged in it?”

“Mr. Leslie, do you dare?” The young man’s face was aflame at the last sneer. “Nay, of course you do. You are Miss Luttrell’s guardian—and more. And your cloth protects you.”

“Do not consider that.”

Few men had ever seen that quiet, grave, country parson so moved. Contempt was in each line of his face—the light of battle glittering in his eyes.

“I was a soldier ere I was in the Church, and—and—— Heaven forgive me, of what am I talking? Mr. Langridge, you want your freedom? For my ward I say, take it. She is a worse match even than you think. Her misfortunes accumulate. This day, I believe, she has lost every penny of her small fortune, and now a most valuable love joins it. Nay,” for the other would have interrupted, “let me finish. I will do as you wish—I will tell Miss Luttrell you are—what you are. Go your way, and see her no more.”

“I deserve this.”

As Cuthbert Langridge spoke, the storm, ever drawing nearer unnoticed by them, broke over their heads in one long-sustained crashing thunder-peal, at which the frightened horse plunged and reared as his rider mounted, whilst the rain began to fall in a torrent.

“I deserve it—her hatred, your scorn, and yet I must see her once again. I will see her, and after that happen what may. I will, though the tempest beat me to the earth, though the wrath of the sky,” as a gleaming flash seemed to envelop them in fire, “end a wretched existence.”

He held forth his hand, but the other made no response. Another instant and it was too late. Only one person should ever clasp the hand of Cuthbert Langridge in life again.

The storm was at its height. The wind, awakened in its fury at last, swept over the wild land, and dashed the rain before it. The lightning gleamed incessantly, and overhead was the ceaseless deafening roar of thunder.

Drenched and weary the vicar reached his home, to find no Grace Luttrell. She had gone over the moor alone, on a mission of charity to some poor cottage toilers, and still, as the hours waned, returned not.

She might have stayed for the storm.

No; the afternoon lengthened into evening, and the tempest rolled away and died over the sea. The night came down in thick darkness at first, then through the storm-rack the moon was peeping forth, and, guided by its light, those who had gone forth to seek, found her.

Found her on the wet and sodden ground, where the granite precipices of Cheale Tor frowned darkly above her. Found her senseless and cold, the presentment of death itself, which was so near. Her arms were round the still form of Cuthbert Langridge, whom no caress on this earth should ever awaken again. The tempest had indeed crushed him. The tale was read in the hoof-prints, telling of a wild struggle on the treacherous road, and a fearful fall, in which horse and rider had perished, where, hastening homeward, Grace found them.

Cuthbert Langridge’s words had come true. He had seen her once again. All unknowing his weak unworthiness, her hand had held his as he entered the dark valley, her loving, sorrowing eyes had seen the light of life quenched in his.

CHAPTER IV.

“THE house seems very silent, Aunt Pryor, since Amy and Kate have left us. They are far on the sea now, but I almost wish my brother Charles had never sent for them.”

“I do not know about that,” said Mrs. Pryor in answer to the Rev. Norman’s regret.

Mrs. Pryor was just two years older than when she made her first appearance in this chronicle. At her age two years mean a great deal. There had grown in her a little more regard for self, a love of peace and quietness, and she hardly mourned the lost noise and chatter of a couple of irrepressible children.

“It was better for you, Norman, and for them,” and, inwardly, “for me too.”

“I suppose you are right,” rejoined the vicar, as he turned over the bundle of letters before him. “One, two, five, six, and all for Grace. They do not look like valentines either; there, who should send valentines to this out-of-the-way spot? Poor Grace! It is a dreary life for her.”

“Yet she has been very happy here.”

It was the voice of Grace herself entering silently, to hear his words. She stood by his side. A little sadder than of yore, as befitting her half-mourning robe, but fair as ever. Loveable as when she flitted

past his study window, when Cuthbert Langridge told his tale, and the vicar put aside his unfinished task.

"She has been very happy here, and will ever remember Stanton Pomrey, and its kind hearts."

She took the letters from his hand. She could not but notice his glance of surprise, but only answered it with a smile, as she said :

"Is that all? I expected a great many more."

Then she drew a little away, and opened them one by one. Her face changed as she read them. Watching her, he saw hope, expectant at first, gradually fade. He saw amusement, a trace of contempt, and finally something akin to sadness.

"Ah me!" she almost sighed, "it is a hard lesson for vanity. The world does not value Grace Luttrell, and her few poor accomplishments, so highly as she thought. Will you give me your opinion on this, please?" timidly holding forth one letter only. "There is no other worth a reply."

"Why, what does this mean?" The vicar of Stanton Pomrey laid it down in surprise. "An answer to your advertisement, as a governess!"

"Exactly," she rejoined, trying to speak calmly. Then, in quite a business-like tone: "Please counsel me. I am so ignorant of the world. The writer seems to expect a great deal, and offers but small remuneration."

He tossed the letter aside.

"Mrs. Brownjohn, which appears to be the lady's name, might be hiring a cook. That she should address you so!" The vicar's tone was scornful, but it changed all in a moment. "Grace, why was I not told of this? Was I unworthy of your confidence?"

"I beg your pardon," she answered with a quick catching of the breath. "I ought to have consulted you as my guardian."

"As your friend," he interrupted, "and one who would do much to serve you."

"I know it. Perhaps I seem ungrateful. Believe me, I did not mean it so. But you were so immersed in your books, I did not care to worry you with my small affairs. It was not a secret. Mrs. Pryor knew."

"You knew, aunt? You advised this. You would have let this poor child go forth into the world. Was that kind?"

Aunt Pryor deliberately put down her knitting—the quantity of wool she got through in that way for the neighbouring poor was a marvel—and laying it aside,

even for a moment, was evidence of her being in earnest. She rose from her chair.

"Yes, I did," she said. "It was my advice. It was better for both of you."

She looked at Grace—waiting almost like a culprit for sentence—at the Rev. Norman, with a strange indefinable glance, under which his calm face grew restless, and without another word, she left them together.

"Grace, my poor child"—he smiled just a little—"I ought not to call you so, but you are a child as compared with me, your guardian—are you so anxious to leave us?"

"No, and yes," she replied sadly. "No, for a kindness—a protection for which I am ever grateful; yes, that I may prove that gratitude. It is my duty. What claim have I? What right to be a burden? Nay, hear me," when he would have stayed her. "I thought—I hoped to repay you, but that was ere my little fortune was wrecked. Even after that there was work for me in the education of your brother's children. Now Amy and Kate are gone and left me no excuse to eat the bread of idleness, why should I not go also?"

"Because I cannot live without——"

He checked the words with a weary sigh. Had she heard what was little more than a whisper? Surely; or why that heightened colour, that averted face, those downcast eyes?

"Grace," he went on after a while, "have I seemed unkind to you? It is the second time I have heard of my books taking my thoughts away. Once before, two years ago, when he who is gone won your heart—you told me so. Did you think me careless of the future?"

"No, never that"—her eyes were uplifted one instant, but sank again before the unutterable tenderness in his—"never that. But our aims, our pursuits, our very lives, were so different. You were so grave, so serious, so earnest in all you deemed duty, and I was young and thoughtless. I know I do not make myself clear. But I could not tell a love-tale to you. You seemed annoyed. I thought you avoided me, and that it was natural. My lost Cuthbert was so different. Forgive me, Mr. Leslie. I was young. I know now how good and noble you are, and—and——"

Then the girl broke down utterly. Little by little the fair face turned from him to be hidden in her trembling hands, and the pleading voice was lost in choking sobs.

He did not speak. He sat there quiet,

unmoved, until she recovered herself. The sorrowing girl's accents had been a revelation to him. She knew then her lover's unworthiness. Hardly expressed in words he read so much. Yet the knowledge had not come to her through him.

"You are young, Grace," he said kindly, "and life may have much in store for you yet. For myself there is naught to forgive. Your thoughts were but the outcome of your years. I am nearly old enough to be your father. A humdrum country parson, what should I understand of love? But, my child, there is no need for you to be in servitude to Mrs. Brownjohn—if I have the lady's name correctly," trying to force a smile. "There is a home for you at Stanton Pomrey—a home for the daughter of my dear dead friend, until—until"—despite his self-command, the vicar's voice trembled a little; but with an effort—"until some happy man bears her away to a brighter fate."

"That will never be," she whispered; "this place will always be dear to me for—"

"The memory of the dead," he said. But she answered him:

"No; for the love and tenderness of the living."

"Do you—can you love the living, Grace?"

He put the question eagerly. Stirred at last out of his assumed composure, a wild hope, long crushed down, was springing in his heart, and the hands were trembling which would draw hers away from a blushing face. He saw it glowing rosy red through the slender fingers, and he saw more than that in one look which brought him a great joy.

"Grace, will you stay at Stanton Pomrey?"

"If you can make me of any service to you," came a soft whisper. "If you wish it so."

He left her then. He walked into his study, and to where, so long ago, he had laid aside an unfinished task. The gilding in its flimsy lace edges had tarnished, the ink faded a little. But there still were the few sentences, telling the unfinished tale of

his love. And this was the Rev. Norman Leslie's valentine.

"Dearest, will you read?" as he came again, and laid it before her. "You were right, I did avoid you. I dared not trust myself. See what I wrote once—two years ago—was writing when life grew so dark with me, I could not write more."

Again he left her. With forced calmness he seated himself away, and so waited while she read.

"Will you stay, Grace?" he asked at length. "I can make you useful, dear, as the vicar's wife."

"I will stay with you ever," she murmured, "and can ask no happier fate."

"You are sure, dear one?" He was holding her away from him, gazing with all the deep affection of his nature into the grey eyes shining through happy tears. "Sure, darling, it is not kindness to me—not gratitude for what is little enough!"

"Yes," striving to hide her face upon his breast; "it is both kindness and gratitude from a heart sure of itself at last."

His strong hands yielded. Hidden in his embrace there came yet a softer whisper:

"It is—it is also—love."

There was an affinity betwixt Aunt Pryor and that valentine—if valentine it may be called. Of course she re-entered at that moment. But, discreet soul that she was, she calmly pursued her knitting, where she left it.

"Aunt, you see," he said.

"I see," she answered, well pleased. "But then I have seen it for years. My advice was not so bad. It was time to understand each other. I knew that Grace loved you."

"And I had ceased to hope that it could be so. What am I? An elderly, plain—"

"Humdrum country parson, and the best in all the world."

The words were Grace's. Really, it is to be feared that as a vicar's prospective wife she was somewhat irreverent. But the humdrum parson was content. He folded his valentine. Aunt Pryor never had seen it, and was not to see it even then. So with deep, heartfelt joy he laid it away, to remain ever an unfinished task.

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in a confidential and impressive tone, with an emphatic nod, and a chuck of his thumb over his shoulder in Archie's direction: "Tha hast no occasion to be flayed, miss; he mud drive t' Queen. He knaws what belongs to a engine amoast as weel as mysen," which, from a West Riding man, was equivalent to saying: "He's as nearly perfect an engine-driver as it is possible for mortal man to be."

Having thus set at rest Ida's dread disturbing doubts of Archie's capacity, Ben stepped back without another word to the footplate, and by turning the excess steam into the tender, put an end to the possibility of any further audible conversation. But indeed there was no time for more, for the Elstree train came in at this moment, and Ida, having again shaken hands with Archie, was hurried back by Dick to their carriage.

"That was my cousin," said Ida, as she took her seat.

"Which?" asked Dick with an amusing assumption of perplexity.

"They're so difficult to distinguish, I can hardly tell you," replied Ida, returning his smile.

"The one you shook hands with, or the one who shook hands with you?"

Dick's pride was of rather a flunkey kind, and he was not over pleased at the part which had just been played by his princess before a platform full of people.

"The one I shook hands with. He has a mania for engine-driving. It was Archie Guard, Mrs. Tuck."

"Oh, indeed," with exceeding dryness.

Mrs. Tuck believed, or, at least, believed that she believed, her poor dear husband's version of his relations with Mrs. John and Archie, and would not listen to Ida's glowing account of them. It was the only sore subject between herself and Ida, and came at last to be tacitly tabooed. Therefore there was nothing more said of this rencontre during the journey. All the same, they thought much about Archie—Ida especially—and were to think more about him before the day was done.

As it was to be a long day—since to suit Ida they were to stay for the concert in the evening—Dick insisted that they should take things easy, which, being interpreted, meant that with the exception of lunch and dinner, and many intervening refreshments, they were to do nothing. And truly Ida would not have seen much of the exhibition if she had not made use of the intervals in which Dick had to take the

narcotic of a cigar to deaden his sufferings. Then she would now and again leave Mrs. Tuck seated where all the dresses must pass her in review, and seek out such pictures as seemed from the catalogue of most promise.

She stood opposite one of these whose subject was described in the catalogue by an extract from the *Tatler*—poor Dick Steele's tender picture of his first introduction to death:

"The first sense of sorrow I ever knew was upon the death of my father, at which time I was not quite five years of age; but was rather amazed at what all the house meant, than possessed of a real understanding why nobody would play with us. I remember I went into the room where his body lay, and my mother sat weeping alone by it. I had my battledore in my hand, and fell a-beating the coffin, and calling papa; for, I know not how, I had some idea that he was locked up there."

The painter, diverging a little from his text, represented the child as arrested in the act of beating the coffin with his battledore by his mother's struggling through tears to explain to him what death, and a father's death, meant. The stealing dawn of awe and woe in the child's face was masterly done.

As Ida stood transfixed before this picture, the sorrow of her own childhood to its least circumstance rose up vividly before her. She travelled over again in thought every step of that *via dolorosa* till she stood by the grave-side in a thick darkness of desolation that might be felt. But out of that deepest darkness broke the dawn. She looked up from the grave-side into Mrs. John's face, as it had been the face of an angel, and heard again that voice which trembled like a tear as it sympathised with her.

By the grave-side, too, she saw Archie's bright, generous, boy's face, blushing as she thanked him for making it a garden. And then a quick blush suffused her own face at the remembrance of his kiss and hers, and her promise: "I shall always love you, Archie—always, and I shall marry you, if you want me, when you're a man."

"You've forgotten——" whispered Archie's voice in her ear.

She turned startled, and so suddenly as to arrest the remainder of the sentence. The pink flush in her face deepened to scarlet. For a second she was certain he was answering thoughts clear as speech to herself.

"I beg your pardon for startling you. I was going to say you've forgotten your catalogue."

Oh, bathos ineffable! Ida, rising to examine the picture more closely, had left her catalogue on a chair, whence a fierce old dame, thinking it meant as a retainer of a seat she coveted, had indignantly removed it to the floor. Archie, who had been watching and worshipping Ida for some time at a short distance, then stepped forward to take up the catalogue and return it to her.

"Worshipping her" we say, for, since they last met he had heard of Seville-Sutton's jilting her, and put at once his own generous construction on the story. Jilt Ida! If that automaton of a man was not engaged to her, most certainly she had refused him.

"You've forgotten your catalogue."

"Thank you," she replied, recovering herself with a great effort. "I had forgotten everything for the moment."

"You think the picture so good?"

"I'm no judge. It may be poor as a picture, but I like it as I like Home, Sweet Home, or Auld Lang Syne. The music may be poor, or poorly played, the charm is in the association."

"It is Auld Lang Syne," said Archie in a low voice of sympathy, seeing now the meaning and the memories the picture had for Ida.

"You've not forgotten?" she answered in a low, sweet, appealing tone.

The girl at the moment had a longing inexpressible that those old days and old relations might come back.

"I can never forget, but from an opposite reason to yours, Ida. They were the happiest days of my life."

"Yes; I remember Mrs. Pybus telling me you were always happiest in doing kindnesses. You might well have been happy then;" her lustrous eyes, aglow with more than gratitude, turned full upon him. This the girl he tried to scorn as the incarnation of a sordid pride!

Then with a sudden smile she said, to allow his escape from a mood whose seriousness he might find embarrassing:

"I've got all your presents still, except the white mice."

"And I, yours," in a low tone.

He was by no means anxious to escape from the serious mood.

"Mine! Why, I never gave you anything. I had never anything to give."

"Not this!" opening a locket, and showing a shining tress.

"Oh, that," with a burning blush. Then in a quick, confused, breathless tone, she was driven, she could not have told why, to add: "You adopted me, then, like Mrs. Pybus, and were more than a cousin to me—a brother to me, Archie, and are still?" with a pleading look. "And there's something I should like to tell you, as a brother, and that I should like you to tell Mrs. Pybus. Could we get into a less crowded room?" In truth, she was less anxious to escape the crowd than to gain a moment's reprieve from her miserable confession. "There; one can breathe more freely here," though she hardly seemed to find this relief. Then after a pause she plunged headlong in, as it were, with shut eyes and a shudder. "I wanted to tell you, and I wanted you to tell Mrs. Pybus, since she thinks it best I should not write to her—I wanted you to tell her, Archie, that I'm engaged."

Dead and dismal silence for a moment or two.

"To Mr. Seville-Sutton?" gasped Archie at last.

"Oh no," in a tone which would have convinced Mrs. Grundy that Ida had not been jilted by that gentleman. "To Captain Brabazon, Mrs. Tuck's nephew, whom you saw with me on the platform."

"Oh!" ruefully; and then after a pause, in a perfunctory voice, he added: "I hope you'll be happy, Ida."

"Thank you, Archie," as though she was acknowledging his promise to attend her funeral. She, of course, did not mean her voice to be as dismal as it sounded. Archie was distressed by its dismal ring? Well, no; we can't say he was. He found some cold comfort in it rather, with the selfishness of our sex. Again there fell a forlorn silence between them for a few seconds. Then Ida, as though to turn the subject, broached another bit of startling news. "You must tell Mrs. Pybus also, Archie, another piece of sensational news, if she has not seen it already in the paper. I had a narrow escape from being bitten by a mad dog a short time ago. It was making right at me when Captain Brabazon rushed between us, and got badly bitten on the arm, and had to burn out the part himself with a hot poker."

"Since you were engaged?"

"No, before," growing scarlet with the consciousness that she was meanly accounting for their engagement. She scorned

herself the more for this meanness because she felt that Archie saw through it. "He has shown himself noble in every way," she added, trying to patch the business up, "and he is a great deal too good for me."

"I suppose it's all settled?" with something like a groan.

"Yes."

"The time too?"

"It's to be soon."

"Not before you see mother, Ida. I think you ought to tell her of it yourself. Don't you think Mrs. Tuck might let you come to us for a week?"

"I'm afraid not. It isn't Mrs. Tuck, Archie. She would let me do anything. I cannot tell you how kind she has been to me always. But Mr. Tuck seems to be quite upset by the mere mention of your name, and she has him to consider."

"Ida, you must see mother before you do this."

You see, Archie spoke as though there was not the least question of Ida's heart being in the business; and, indeed, without intending it deliberately, she made this plain enough by her manner.

"There's no one I should so much like to see," she sighed wistfully.

"No one would so much like to see you. Ida, you ought to see her; you must see her."

"I don't know. If I can, but——"

At this point Dick appeared.

"I've been through all the rooms looking for you, Ida."

"I'm glad you've got through them all at last," she replied with rather an embarrassed smile. "Let me introduce you to my cousin. Mr. Guard—Captain Brabazon."

Dick honoured Archie with a supercilious bow and stare, and muttered something about his aunt wanting Ida.

"I shall see you again, I dare say, Archie, as we stay to the bitter end," shaking hands with him, nevertheless.

We are aware that there is much in the young lady's share of the foregoing conversation which seems to need explanation, or exculpation, even. She seems to show bad taste both in the time and manner of the disclosure to Archie of her engagement. She tells him of it apparently to prevent his making love to her, though he may not have had the least intention of the kind; yet in telling him of it she makes it pretty plain that she is heartwhole, so far as her betrothed is concerned. But, in truth, if Ida was safeguarding any heart by the

disclosure, it was her own. The picture, the host of associations it aroused, and Archie's treasury of the tress of her hair, had the curious antithetical effect of bringing her engagement to Dick, and all it involved, vividly and miserably before her mind, and by no effort at the moment could she have forced herself to appear happy in it. She had never felt so unhappy in it.

Accordingly, Dick, finding her absent and out of spirits, was inclined to jealousy of this detrimental cousin.

"Who is this engine-driving cousin?" he asked his aunt, when Ida had left them for a few minutes, ostensibly to look a little closer at some of the pictures; really, to indulge her own sad thoughts in peace.

"I don't know who he is, but I can tell you who he claims to be."

She then narrated to Dick Mr. Tuck's preposterous version of the affair, according to which Archie was a pretender put forward by the designing Mrs. Pybus. In her heart Mrs. Tuck did not really believe this absurd story, nor did Dick.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed with unusual energy. "Then, if he dies without a will, there'll be the deuce to pay. You never told me about this before."

"What was the good? My poor dear husband gets into such a state if any one talks of it."

"There'll be talk enough about it if he dies without a will; and the lawyers will bag every penny you have. It will be a very ugly business, I can tell you."

"He'll not make a will, Dick—not now."

"He'll make it fast enough if you tell him that, if he don't, all he's got will go to the lawyers."

Not a bad suggestion at all, thought Mrs. Tuck.

"Well, Dick, I'll see what he says."

"And the sooner you see to it the better. He can't go on taking medicine like that for ever."

For Dick, if he had had the writing of Mr. Tuck's epitaph, would have composed for him a similar one to that quoted by Pliny: "Turba se medicorum periisse." For himself Dick considered that the sooner, under these circumstances, he secured Ida and her ten thousand pounds the better. Therefore the immediate effect upon him of his aunt's disclosure was the redoubling then and there of his attentions to Ida—an obsequiousness which, as we shall find, had unforeseen and unfortunate results for him.

For when Mrs. Tuck, wearied out, proposed to return home at once, foregoing the concert, and Ida, now in no mood to enjoy music, however celestial, at once assented, Dick, to the amazement of both, wouldn't hear of it. Ida hadn't so many chances of hearing good music that she could afford to lose this one. And that new singer, too, Madame Cambric, or whatever her name was, that she was so anxious to hear, down for four things! His aunt was quite pleased with Dick's gallantry, and Ida grateful and remorseful. Why should she feel only gratitude for all this devotion, and feel even gratitude a burden? She took herself sorely to task for this bad and base spirit, and resolved to force herself into a more gracious acceptance of Dick's attentions. She did what she could to repay them at the moment by an attempt to spare him the concert. She assured him with perfect sincerity that she didn't care in the least for it, that she much preferred returning home at once. But Dick, having tasted for the first time of the sweets of martyrdom, was deaf to all dissuasion, and must manfully go through with it to the end.

Thus they stayed the concert out to the last bar, with, as we have above suggested, results which Dick did not take into account in reckoning up the cost of his martyrdom.

ABOUT SOME OLD MASTERS.

IN the large gallery at Burlington House, and in that place of honour lately filled by Sir Frederick's Leighton's Phryne at Eleusis, hangs Reynolds's Mrs. Sheridan as St. Cecilia. It is one of the loveliest pictures ever painted by Sir Joshua, which is saying much; it is one of the best and most original in the present exhibition of Old Masters, which is saying infinitely more. In point of charm and simple beauty it is better than anything in the collection at the Grosvenor Gallery; better even than the delightful Child with a Mouse, or than Miss Cholmondeley, that charming presentment of a little girl carrying a dog across a brook. The original of this St. Cecilia was the once celebrated actress and singer, Elizabeth Linley, a daughter of the musical composer. She married Sheridan in 1772. Reynolds has painted her seated on a low stool playing an organ, with a beautiful simplicity of pose, a grace of gesture, and a sweetness of expression, such as even he has rarely if

ever surpassed. She wears a white dress, draped about her with the simple and consummate elegance which appears peculiar only to the art of classic times—the art of Greece, of Raphael, and of a brief period of the eighteenth century. The background, like the general tone of the picture, is a soft warm grey, half-brown, half-silver; suggestive and dreamy as the sound of singing heard across the sea. Cecilia, pressing the keys with dainty and loving fingers, listens to the sound she charms from the flutes of her organ, whilst two little child-angels nestle to her side, and, rapt in a lovely delight, lift their voices in a song of adoration. Seldom has the effect of music been suggested by line and colour with such supreme success. Raphael painted a St. Cecilia, and to see it is to imagine in a dim and mundane way some ineffable music of Paradise; Millet painted The Angelus, and to see it is to feel the unconscious epic of peasant existence, the pathetic calm and beauty of twilight, and the soft persuasion of the bell ringing the world to prayer. Reynolds's picture, and the sentiment it expresses, is, as it were, poised between these two; having something in common with both, and something that neither possesses. Raphael's saint dreaming of heaven, is divine; Millet's peasants, so devout and simple, are deeply and touchingly human. Reynolds's beautiful girl, and the singing babes beside her, are human too, in a different sphere; but the impression they create is akin to that with which we are filled by the celestial purity of Raphael's masterpiece. The impression is much weaker, it is true, and less noble perhaps; but it is not less lovely. Reynolds, living in a society distinguished by singular grace and amenity, studied it and painted it through the medium of the Old Masters, and the result is as obvious in this picture as in any other from the same hand. In a great measure the peculiar charm of it is distinctive of Reynolds and the eighteenth century. But his imagination worked in constant reference to the ancient kings of art—to Michael Angelo, and Raffaele, Correggio, and Titian. And so it would seem that in painting this portrait with poetical surroundings and significance, he must have had in his mind the noble charm of the work of him of Urbino—possibly that same St. Cecilia we have spoken of. And as for the children, those lovely, earnest little singers, with their angel-wings and innocent eyes, do they not remind us of

the wondering cherubs at the foot of the San Sisto Madonna? Surely, yes. And it is notable that, slightly painted as they are, they take no lowly rank in such trying comparison as this. Reynolds, as all the world well knows, excelled in the portrayal of children, and these in the St. Cecilia are amongst the sweetest he ever did. It is not too much to name them in the same breath with the little ones of Van Dyck, and the babes—divine and human—of the princely host of painters of Italian Renaissance.

And, its commanding beauty apart, this picture is historically very interesting. Reynolds himself prized it more, perhaps, than any other he produced. In the letter to Sheridan, in which he offered to the wit and dramatist the portrait of his wife for less than half its value, Reynolds wrote: "It is with great regret that I part with the best picture that I ever painted." It was painted in 1775, three years after Sheridan had run away with his lovely bride, and about the time that *The Rivals* was produced at Covent Garden; but it did not leave Sir Joshua's possession until fifteen years afterwards—that is to say, it remained with the artist until Sheridan found himself in a position to pay for it. The little angels—it is worth noting, also—are portraits of the children of Sir Joshua's good friend Cooté.

In this same Third Gallery are several examples of Romney, of whom Reynolds appears to have cherished a profound dislike, and who at one time was a considerable rival, socially speaking, of the first president of the Royal Academy. There is a Lady Hamilton as a Bacchante, but not of much artistic account; there are two other canvases which illustrate Romney, in the one case, at his very worst and silliest, in the other, at his very best. The first picture in the Third Gallery is Flaxman Modelling the Bust of Hayley; it is not merely one of the most preposterous absurdities Romney ever produced—and he produced a good many—but one of the worst things ever seen on the walls of the Academy. Hayley—a mild poetaster, only remembered now as the author of a pretentious biography of the painter—stands full length, in an attitude which is meant to be heroic, but is merely affected and inept. Behind him a feeble person dabs at a shapeless mass of clay, after the manner of one who is indeed a raw apprentice to the business, and beset with vast doubts about everything, particularly himself. And yet this vague dabber,

this wooden cipher of imbecility, stands for Flaxman, the greatest sculptor this country has ever produced, the supreme artist who drew from the stones of Greece the spirit of Greek design—the grandeur of its line, the beauty of its imagination—and impressed it upon his own work, so that almost everything he did is masterly. Odd, is it not, that "the man in Cavendish Square," as Reynolds called him, should treat genius thus? And yet Romney was a good friend to Flaxman, and the sculptor who could carve better than the painter could paint has said of him: "I always remember his notice of my boyish years and productions with gratitude; his original and striking conversation, his masterly, grand, and striking compositions are continually before me, and I still feel the benefits of his acquaintance and recommendations." A tribute as honourable as it was hearty.

Let us turn, however, to Mrs. Jordan as Peggy in *The Country Girl*. Here Romney is indeed at his best. Nothing of Romney's exhibited in recent years—and a good many of his pictures have been shown of late—equals it in pictorial and technical qualities, nothing so pleasant and harmonious in colour, so broad and expressive as to handling, so simple and yet so complete as to design. Mrs. Jordan was a singularly fascinating and lovely woman; her expression here is charming, and her gesture is caught and fixed with a spontaneity and liveliness not often equalled and rarely surpassed. Indeed, we shall not feel in the least surprised if many people are inclined to appreciate its laughing cheerfulness and healthy grace better even than the more pensive charm of Reynolds's St. Cecilia. Mrs. Jordan (Dorothy Bland) was born at Waterford in 1762, and made her first appearance on the stage in Dublin at the tender age of fifteen. She afterwards came to London, and performed at Drury Lane in 1785. She was also painted by Lawrence, whose picture may be remembered by those of our older readers who saw it at the International Exhibition of 1868. Romney's delightful work, if we are not mistaken, was engraved by John Ogborne in 1788, and prints are worth having. Probably no prettier Peggy has been seen before or since.

In this wonderful Third Gallery is a gigantic masterpiece by Rubens—*The Glorification of a Prince of Orange*, lent by the Earl of Jersey. This large octagonal work presents (according to the catalogue)

an apotheosis of Frederick Henry, third son of William the Silent, and grandfather of our own William the Third. It is, of course, an allegory, and of much the same order as the mighty achievements from the same hand which glorify the Louvre. The Prince, to all appearances perfectly daft with excess of ecstasy, is lifted by Minerva to a shrine amongst the clouds; Envy—a sort of desperate serpentine horror—clutching at him in an agony, is repelled by that magnificent creature, Truth; beneath, and galloping through space in a fierce friskiness born of unadulterated joy, is a lion; whilst around are grouped various chubby Cupids, and Graces who, notwithstanding a decidedly Flemish development of form and feature, are very gorgeous and alluring beings indeed. On the whole, therefore, the apparent lunacy of Frederick Henry is not in the least surprising; indeed, his imbecile expression amounts to a master-touch of truth. If ALL THE YEAR ROUND were purely an artistic periodical we might say much of the technical splendours of this remarkable work; but writing as we do for each and all, it must suffice to say that in every technical quality it is simply magisterial and splendid. The power, the versatility, the invention and resource, the daring of Rubens are here displayed in a manner most impressive.

Let us go back now to the Second Gallery, and look at the landscapes of Rubens—best of them *The Farm at Laeken*, lent by the Queen—and the very vigorous and striking *Lioness and the Wild Boar* by Snyders, friend and collaborateur of Rubens, and mighty painter of animals into the bargain. In this room are three Rembrandts and a Ferdinand Bol. The mellow *Portrait of a Lady*, by Rembrandt (106), from Lansdowne House, has attracted much attention from the critics, and it is undoubtedly a fine example of one style of the master. Still, we prefer the rich and powerful *Portrait of a Young Man* (119), which shows this king of painters at his best. This should be compared with the *Head of a Young Man* (113), by Ferdinand Bol. Bol was perhaps in some respects the most successful of Rembrandt's pupils, and here the master's influence is strong indeed. But there is great individuality also; and if in point of warm imaginative colour this is scarcely as beautiful as the *Head of a Girl* of last winter's exhibition, it is nevertheless a remarkably fine example of the artist's achievement. There are two Van Dycks—a *Charles the First* and a

Queen Henrietta—but they are not first-rate specimens. Far more representative are a couple of very fine portraits by Franz Hals, hanging in the Second Gallery on either side of a large, glorious, golden landscape by Albert Cuyp. Everybody must appreciate the vigour and vitality of these heads; the eyes look at us as in life, and the noble swagger of the seventeenth century is set before us with dash and distinction, and a sort of heroic humour. Apropos of Van Dyck and Hals; we may repeat here a story which possibly has been heard or read before to-day, but is worth telling again. Van Dyck being in Haarlem, where Hals resided, called upon him to paint his portrait. Hals was dragged from some drinking-shop near by, but forthwith started the portrait, which he finished with a rapidity almost miraculous. But Van Dyck was not to be outdone—not he! He asked Hals to change places, observing significantly that "he thought he could do as good as that." When Hals saw his visitor's work, he cried: "You are either Van Dyck or the devil!" He had recognised the master's touch. This story is told by Houbraken; if it is not true, it is certainly *ben trovato*, for it is entirely characteristic of Hals, who without doubt was a drunkard, and a wife-beater to boot. It is interesting to note that only of late years have his great merits as a portrait-painter been acknowledged. He was born in 1584, yet it is recorded that so late as 1745 a portrait of himself fetched only fifty-five florins, say four pounds five shillings, whilst in 1823 a *Girl with a Kitten* realised only thirty-five guineas. But we have changed all that, and lucky indeed would he be who should "pick up" a genuine Hals for such paltry sums as these. In these times to be a successful collector one must be a millionaire, unless one happens to be even as Professor Legros, gifted with a magic eye for unsuspected genuine old masters, and possessed of consummate knowledge withal.

The exhibition is particularly strong in landscape. Indeed, students seldom enjoy such an opportunity of tracing the influence of one painter upon another—of the old schools on the new—as is afforded this year at Burlington House. To begin with, there is the influence of Claude Lorraine upon Richard Wilson, who, not unhappily, has been dubbed "the English Claude." There are several excellent Wilsons; and there are two or three good Claudes, as

well as one supremely good. No. 57, *The Lake of Nemi*, is Wilson at his best; lovely, suggestive, touched with romantic mystery, and yet serenely classical after the manner of Claude. But Claude's masterpiece in the Third Gallery is, we take it, a more perfect and commanding work. It is numbered 167, and entitled *Philip Baptising the Eunuch*; but it goes without saying that the incident of the baptism is an entirely secondary matter, alike in the painter's intention, and the spectator's mind. St. Philip, and the Eunuch, and the chariot with its heroic horses, are as nothing to the lovely landscape in which they are set. In gradations which one feels rather than perceives, the land melts away to where the "quiet coloured end of evening smiles"; on the left is a glimpse of the illimitable sea; on the right the soft and noble contours of the "everlasting hills"; and in the foreground Claude's own quiet pool, and tall trees dreaming in the evening air. The perfect balance of form and composition; the unity of effect, and the completeness and supreme elegance with which it is rendered; the depth and charm of the sentiment—these combine to make it one of the finest examples of the master that has been seen for many a day. From such achievements as this Wilson learned to gather what is best in his work; such triumphs as this Crome and Constable respected and admired, and Corot loved faithfully to the end.

The mention of Constable and Crome reminds us that each is represented this year by a single canvas. Constable's *Sketch for the Picture of Salisbury Cathedral* (9) is almost the first thing to attract the visitor's eye in the First Gallery. The tall and delicate spire is vignettèd between over-arching trees, behind it a sky of spacious blue, broken by one sailing cloud, shining white and full in the sunlight. It is more properly a "study" rather than a sketch; and it is particularly interesting in that it proves that Constable, the painter of the broad brush, the master of swift effects—the artist who with seven strokes sets before you the "White Horse," harness and all; and in as many more gives you a summer shower, with its airy mingling of shadow, and shine, and dew—could be very, very careful when he felt that care was necessary. The cathedral here is painted with an affectionate regard for detail which should please a pre-Raphaelite and win the admiration even of Mr. Ruskin.

The Landscape, by John Crome (13), is close by Constable's fresh and delightful study; and it offers interesting contrast. Its method is not less broad, but its manner is altogether quieter. But then, the time is sunset, when the air is still, the light warm and golden, and the shadows full and deep. We have a rustic bridge across a stream, and cattle standing dubious and drowsy in the quiet water under the trees, whilst a high tower—rather like a chimney-shaft, by the way—rises in the distance. The whole thing is wonderfully simple and complete, very fine in qualities of colour and tone; and full of light and air. In fact, it is one of the best things in the entire exhibition. And Crome was an apprentice to a house-painter!

It is no very easy matter, this chatting about the Old Masters. It is not possible altogether to repress enthusiasm. To do so would be correct, no doubt; but it would also be very dull. And yet if one grows honestly enthusiastic about this or that picture, one is sure to be nonplussed by those awful experts. We were inclined, for instance, to feel a great many noble things concerning the *Portrait of Himself*, ascribed to Andrea del Sarto. But we find the critics have been fighting about it as is their wont, with results disastrous to some of them, and bewildering to the public.

Two prominent writers boldly declare that Andrea's work is not visible on that canvas at all; the Fiend of Restoration having obliterated it with complete success. Another critic holds up the picture as a supreme example to the portrait-painters of our own time; which is rather severe satire, if it be true, as the *Daily Telegraph* puts it, that the restorer has "killed Andrea del Sarto."

It is clear, therefore, that in a case like this humble commentators had better be careful of their words. However, we confess to feeling considerable admiration for this remarkably disputed work; and, let us quickly add, we are not singular in our weakness, having, in fact, several redoubtable critics, and any number of amateurs, to support us therein. Indeed, we may safely remark that, restored or not restored, the picture is really a fine one, and stands out from the unquestioned masterpieces which surround it, with quite distinctive strength and charm. A genuine Andrea might be expected to do as much, and with excellent reason, Michael Angelo

once said to Raffaele—when the latter was at the pinnacle of his fame—"There is a little fellow in Florence who would bring the sweat to your brow were he engaged on works as great as yours." The little fellow in Florence was Andrea del Sarto; and master-works of his yet exist which show how very true was Angelo's criticism. When Angelo—who rather relished in his gloomy way the infliction of verbal stabs—made that remark to Raffaele, Andrea would be about twenty-five years old, and it was probably about that time that this portrait of himself, if really by himself, was painted. If it is anything like him, he was a very handsome genius, worthy, indeed, to mate the beautiful Lucrezia della Fede, his wife and model, whose fair face and stately figure appear again and again in his work. He loved her so that he neglected both his friends and his duty; and in the end his devotion wrecked his life, and warped his art. Andrea's love-story, in truth, is one of the saddest—as all who know their Browning (who did not read Vasari for nothing) are aware. They called him Andrea the Faultless; but the compliment was not entirely justified. Had he been wiser in his love, that "little fellow in Florence" might have equalled Raffaele, and possibly have outshone him altogether; as it is, his work is wanting in feeling. He was ruined by a deathless passion for a woman who "had no soul."

The Italian pictures are numerous this year; but, on the whole, the Venetian school is not represented as well as usual. Some half-dozen portraits are notable, however, and one ascribed to Giorgione is very beautiful. It is a Portrait of a Lady—one of those lovely faces whose type is the peculiar possession of this master, and perhaps, too, not the least of the things that constitute his special charm. It is common to hear Titian described as the king of the great school of Venice; and in some sense the description is right. But it should never be forgotten that he would not have been the mighty leader he was if Giorgione had not shown the way, and—died. Titian, indeed, only surpassed his pupil because he outlived him by over sixty years; and notwithstanding that advantage, some of our ablest authorities give the palm for colour to Giorgione. He became not merely the master of his fellow-pupils, but the master of his master; in fact, he led the whole Venetian school into that worship of colour which is their chief glory. He died at thirty-three, or there-

abouts; and the story runs that he was killed by the infidelity of the woman he loved. Is that she whose beauty so often arrests us with its spell in Giorgione's pictures, as in some measure it does in this Portrait of a Lady?—the woman whose presentment is a classic—the woman with the sunny brown hair, and lovely face quiet with a sweet and grave serenity, and eyes that softly speak. Was it she who killed him?

MIRAGE.

Hot lies the sand beneath the weary feet,
The skies are dazzling downward through the heat,
No breath of wind to stir the heavy air,
No flock of cloud to break the cruel glare
Of the fierce sunshine, as the reeling brain
Strives to force on the failing strength, in vain.
Nay, for across the desert-stretch it lies,
Gleaming and cool beneath the mocking skies,
The sparkling lake—almost the feverish gaze
Can see its ripples through the silvery haze;
Almost the straining ear can hear the plash,
As its light wavelets on the pebbles dash.
One desperate effort more, and then to lave,
Parched lip and burning forehead in the wave;
One desperate effort more, and at the brink
In agony of thankfulness to sink,
Where the great palm-trees by the waters stand,
And their cool shadows rest upon the sand.
Poor wretch! the treacherous vision lures him on,
Till, faith, and hope, and strength, and courage
gone,
He falls and perishes, and leaves to life,
This lesson—arm ye for the present strife,
On no sweet future build a futile faith,
Do for each hour thy best. So armed for Death.

MEDITATIONS IN A COUNTING-HOUSE.

COMMERCE is the most potent force operating in the relations of mankind. It has grown with civilisation, and is most powerful where civilisation is most advanced. And yet, strange to say, it has not always been regarded as a pursuit adapted to persons of education—in the sense in which we apply education to the "learned professions." In point of fact, members of the learned professions have been accustomed to rank themselves, and have by general accord been ranked, as not only superior to, but as of some fibre quite different from "persons engaged in business." And yet we think it would not be difficult to show that a wider range of faculties is brought into play in the higher walks of commerce and industry than in any single one of the professions. It is not worth while, however, to enter upon the comparison, because in our generation a considerable change has taken place in commerce, and in the manner of regarding it.

It is, for one thing, no longer regarded by those not engaged in it as a mere strife in which the most cunning is, as a rule, the most successful. Business and deception were once, to some people, it is no exaggeration to say, synonymous terms. The art of trading appeared to these the art of deluding—the art of making black appear white—the art of exchanging old lamps for new.

This delusion has vanished, and with it the reproach that used to be in certain circles attached to any "person in trade." The caste distinction has disappeared, and nowadays it is no uncommon thing to find scions of the nobility and landed classes condescending to be "something in the City." There is now, indeed, such a mixture of noble and burgher, that it cannot be said that we have any longer a distinctively "idle class." Idlers in all classes we shall always have, of course, but no longer a select breed whose sole privilege it is to "laze." The profits of landowning are so reduced, that almost every landowner is compelled to seek augmentation of income from some other source. Some of the holders of our oldest titles of nobility are among our largest manufacturers of iron, others are engaged in textile industries, several are extensive shipowners, and one at least in Scotland has lately turned shipbuilder. A still larger proportion finds employment in the management of public companies; and amongst the younger members of the same class, many are now to be found occupying stools in City counting-houses.

It is natural, perhaps, that such an innovation should not have been regarded with universal favour by the rising generation of the mercantile classes. The avenues of trade, these say, are already overcrowded, and we have no room for interlopers. But the avenues of commerce always have been, and always will be, crowded, and a man with a title has just as much right in the crowd as a man without one. The infusion of new, and if you like, bluer, blood is a distinct gain, we hold, and whether cause or not, it is certainly coincident with a marked improvement in the manners of business people. The present writer has been engaged in business from boyhood, and well remembers the heart-breaks which the brusque unceremonious modes of dealing twenty or thirty years ago used to occasion him, fresh from a gentle-mannered home-circle. Now he finds in all parts of the country,

courtesy in business transactions to be the rule rather than the exception. Bores there are still, of course, and none more objectionable than your so-called "self-made man," but they are in the minority. There are few large counting-houses in any one of our great cities where a gentleman's son may not enter with the assurance that he will mix with gentlemen.

We take leave to doubt, however, if the influence on the members of the upper circles who engage in trade is always a favourable one. We are inclined to think the effect in the first instance must be deteriorating. The youthful aristocrat who ventures into business, does so without the traditions or the inherited instincts of the mercantile scion. Although the first object of commerce is to make money, the sole enjoyment of commerce as a pursuit is not in the making of money. There is something a good deal higher than avarice in the thoughtful planning of affairs, and in the exercise of tact, energy, and skill in carrying them through. All the intellectual faculties are brought more or less into play, and the professor of commerce need not necessarily be any more mercenary in his thoughts and aims than the professor of chemistry who pursues his avocation for pecuniary reward. In the game of speculation a man must have the same qualities as a soldier in the game of war, and similarly in breasting the waves of a financial storm he requires all the coolness, and nerve, and fertility of resource of the perfect sailor.

And trade has its æsthetic aspects as well. To examine a good sample of some commodity may impart to the merchant; and to handle a piece of fine, or what the Americans call, "gilt-edged" paper (in other words a good bill), may impart to the banker a pleasure as genuine as that with which the bibliomaniac fondles a precious tome, or a chinamaniac gloats over an old teapot. Commerce, we repeat, is not all sordidity. Money may be its first, but it is not its last object, and there is more true and healthful enjoyment in the process of making than in the possessing.

Commerce, again, inculcates many high virtues. Industry, perseverance, and thrift at once suggest themselves, but besides these, fortitude under misfortune must be a leading characteristic of the perfect business-man. In an old book of travels in Morecco, which we came across lately, the author tells of a merchant of Fex who had had his caravans plundered by the

Arabs three several times and himself three times reduced to absolute poverty, but who murmured not at any one of the disasters, but set himself patiently and quietly to retrieve his fortunes. A man who cannot face losses and bad debts with equanimity makes but a poor merchant. This, however, is a matter of temperament and of experience in which the aristocrat may be on all-fours with the trader-born.

Where the latter has the advantage is in the traditions of his class. He has been brought up in an atmosphere impregnated with the hopes and fears, the successes and failures, of trade. "Shop" may or may not have been talked in his domestic circle, but he has acquired certain nebulous ideas founded on such casual remarks as the infallibility of A in judging cotton, or wheat, or something else; the shrewdness of B in forecasting markets; the smartness of C as a buyer, and of D as a salesman; the cleverness of E as a financier, and so on. These ideas may be nebulous, but they crystallise very rapidly when the lad enters into active business. And even in a state of nebula the young aristocrat has them not. He has a vague notion that "business" consists in sitting at a desk, alternately writing letters and adding up columns of figures in big books, varied with occasional excited rushing about a large room among a crowd of others doing the like. He goes into commerce without any innate conception of the higher qualities required in, and the nobler feelings engendered by, commerce. He enters it to make money, and he is disappointed to find the process not by any means so simple as he expected. He rarely rises above the mere sordidity of his profession, and thus its pursuit has a deteriorating effect upon him.

An unpleasant figure in the business-world of the day is the mercantile "masher." By him we mean the youth who at school and elsewhere has assumed the airs and graces of the class above him. When he enters his father's counting-house he puts on an amazing amount of "side," to the disgust of the old clerks and the ridicule of the young ones. There is always nowadays a tolerably large supply of the mercantile "masher," but his individual life, happily, is not a long one. He either moults his feathers and develops into an active, intelligent merchant, or he drops out of the ranks altogether.

Our remarks thus far have had reference to certain personal features in the commerce

of our day; but there are other features indicative of a change much more serious. The speculative element obtains now in all branches, has extended to departments where it was quite unknown in the writer's young days. Middlemen no longer content themselves with buying from A to sell to B. They probably sell to C, and D, and E, and all the rest of the alphabet, before they have bought a single fraction, and have taken the chance of buying cheaper when the time comes. This is what the Americans call "selling short," and what we call "bearing." It is a favourite saying on the Stock Exchange, that it is "the bear who makes the money," which being literally interpreted means that markets more often go down than up, which is obviously absurd. If the "bear" in the Stock Exchange, as a rule, makes money, it is not because markets have a partiality for him, but because he can exact a profit from those to whom he has sold who do not want what they have bought. They pay a fine, called a "contango," to the seller to postpone delivery, and an accumulation of those contangos forms the profit of the "bear." He can choose his own time to buy in what he has sold, so long as he has capital at command to pay his way against adverse movements in the markets.

With commodities it is different. There is no "contango," and the seller cannot choose his time for delivery. While he is eagerly selling, the market for what he is selling may be rising gradually against him, and yet he must buy in order to fulfil his contracts. It is a hit or miss style of doing business, which is much more common than is generally supposed. It is the result of keen competition, and it is fruitful of mischief. The advice which the elder Vanderbilt gave to his son, "Sonny, never sell what you haven't got," was sound and wise, and it is one of the worst commercial features of the day that it should be so extensively disregarded.

It may be argued that he who buys what he has not sold occupies an analogous position to him who has sold what he has not got. But there is no real analogy. It is the foundation of all legitimate commerce to first acquire that which you propose to sell. The life of a merchant of the old school was a continuous process of education in the art of buying—when to buy, where to buy, and what quantity to buy. And these old-school merchants accurately gauged their outlets, so that

they knew that what they bought they could sell. Our modern trader who is not of a "bearish" turn of mind, is usually possessed with the idea that the particular commodities in which he is interested will "go up." He buys, therefore, not in proportion to the absorbing capacity of his connection, but as much as he can finance, and often more. That is to say, he does not buy for his customers, but he buys "for the rise." He is caught just as often as his neighbour the "bear."

We do not condemn speculation in business. Speculation, indeed, is the soul of commerce. We regard it, however, as a most objectionable feature that the practices as well as the slang of the Stock Exchange should have been imported into mercantile transactions. It is not always easy to define what is legitimate and what is illegitimate speculation; but certainly that is illegitimate which seeks to override the operations of the law of supply and demand. To "sell short," not in anticipation of a fall, but in order to make a fall; to buy, not in anticipation of a rise, but to form a "corner," and force a scarcity, are distinctly improper and vicious practices. Yet they are becoming almost as familiar with us as they are in America.

In speaking of the Stock Exchange we do not wish to decry that important and most useful institution. It represents a distinct and indispensable branch of commerce, but a branch which should always stand by itself. It has developed a species of trading suitable to its arena, but not suitable to other branches. We do not range ourselves among those who condemn wholesale the system on the Stock Exchange of buying and selling what is not intended either to be taken or delivered. The prices of stocks and shares are affected by a great variety of influences which have no effect on other commodities. It is the business of the dealer in them to forecast and gauge these influences, and to trade upon his knowledge and experience. He may, with perfect propriety, buy, not a certain stock, but the advance in price which he expects to see in that stock a fortnight hence, and if at the expiration of that time the advance has not come, there is nothing immoral in his postponing the operation for another fortnight, and so on. In other words, it is quite legitimate to buy or sell probabilities, provided the trader operates within his means, which proviso is applicable to every department of trade. But dealings of this kind require

a natural qualification and undivided attention. Therefore, operations on the Stock Exchange are not adapted to persons engaged in businesses which should engross all their attention, monopolise their energies, and employ all their available capital. It is hard to say whether the tendency has developed from the Stock Exchange outwards, or merges inwards as to a common centre of speculation, but in every department of trade there is now prevalent a disposition to dabble in stocks. Men who have neither the time nor the money to spare out of their own businesses rush off to make wild purchases or sales of shares about which they know little or nothing, and the movements in which they have neither the mental training nor the experience to understand. As a rule they lose at both ends—in their ill-advised speculations, and in weakened allegiance to their own special affairs. We hold, then, that it is illegitimate speculation in which anyone engages outside his own chosen walk.

It has been often said that the tendency of the time is to dispense with middlemen. To some extent this is true, and it is unfortunate both for the middlemen and for the principals. It is all very well to theorise about the advantages of bringing producer and consumer into immediate relation, but the practice is productive of much evil.

For one thing, it forces the middlemen into speculative operations which hurt everybody connected with them. For another, it stimulates over-trading on the part of the producer; and for a third, it restricts the range of choice of the consumer. The special training required to make a man a successful manufacturer does not qualify him to become a successful merchant. Perhaps, indeed, it may have a contrary effect, and, at any rate, the worry and anxiety and risks of distribution must be immensely greater to one who can only give a part of his attention to it, than to one who has been trained to it, and whose sole occupation it is. There is a disposition among economists to depreciate the distributor, but he is as necessary to the general welfare as the producer, and we have always the consolation of reflecting that the limitations of capital will always prevent his utter extermination. The attempts to do without him so far have not been remarkably successful.

The practice of "making corners," that is, of buying up commodities in order to make an artificial scarcity, and therefore

an artificial enhancement of price, has not become so common with us as it unhappily is in America. The reason is, not that there is less inclination, but that there is less opportunity here for speculations of the kind. They are occasionally attempted, and we have never known a single one end successfully for the speculators. These last always seem to forget that what they are buying must be sold some day, and the more a price is artificially inflated, the more rapidly will it run down when the artificial support is withdrawn. We have noticed some efforts being made in the United States to make operations of this kind illegal. The evil, however, is one which will work its own cure. Adversity has a wonderful effect in checking vicious speculation.

It is a remarkable fact that in "dull times" the highways and byeways of commerce are always much sweeter and cleaner than in very lively times. When trade is quiet, people have more leisure to consider their actions and to pick their steps. Thus it is that financial crises act like thunderstorms in purifying the commercial atmosphere. Dull times are to the business man as the virtuous leisure of Opposition to the statesman.

TRAVELS IN THE EAST.

PART I.

BOOKS of Eastern travel have been plentiful enough, and many are the marvels which have therein been recorded. Volumes varying in their size as well as in their style have been as thick as autumn leaves that strew the brooks of Vallombrosa; which, a recent tourist states, is nowadays by no means so remarkable for leafiness as in Milton's time it may have been. Facts and fiction have been copiously mingled in these records, and they who may have smiled at the fables of Herodotus may have likewise been amused by the fancies of Eothen. From St. Paul to Captain Burnaby is rather a long step, but each of them has given some account of Eastern travelling, and writers who have helped to fill the gap between them have, in their turn, done something to enlighten Western ignorance of Oriental sights, and scenery, and life, and locomotion.

So that when I first thought of putting into print some record of my recent travels in the East, I confess I felt alarmed lest I might quite inadvertently be found committing plagiarism. Yet a second thought

convinced me that my fears were wholly groundless. For the fact is, I have never travelled farther East than Venice, and I have no thought of attempting to rival Mr. Ruskin, and to write about that city. The isles of Greece are only known to me in Byron, and, except in picture-galleries, I have never seen the Parthenon. Home-lover as I am, I have never gone to Egypt, much less to Jerusalem, whereof, apart from sacred lore, the only things I know are its artichokes and ponies.

But the country I have visited in my late travels in the East may be reached with no long flight by a home-bird such as I am. The strange scenes I have looked at lie no farther off than Stepney, and the most distant point I gained must certainly be placed within three miles of London Bridge, and may readily be reached by road, or rail, or river. In fact, the purpose of my journey was to make myself acquainted, in some degree at least, with the poor at the East End, and to gain a certain knowledge of their dwellings and their doings.

Being wholly new to the strange land I wished to see, I thought it prudent at the outset to engage a skilful guide, who should direct my progress. The conductor whom I had the good fortune to select was Mr. Walter Austin, who for years has been the manager of the London Cottage Mission. This gentleman has long been familiar with the country and the customs of its people, and, although as yet not famous in the Annals of the Geographical Society, he has certainly done wonders in the way of Eastern exploration. Some account of his good work there has been published in these pages,* and having seen how well he was able to conduct himself on the occasion there described, I felt sure of a safe guide if he would personally conduct me in my course of Eastern travel.

Explorers who intend to visit a strange country provide themselves in general with a vast number of things which may be useful in emergencies, that somehow never happen, and so, when starting on my journey—on the morning, let me add, of the first Wednesday in February—I thought it only prudent to carry an umbrella, which, except a sandwich, was indeed my only baggage. I might have foreseen that the precaution would be quite needless, and, in fact, throughout the day it never rained a drop.

* ALL THE YEAR ROUND, New Series, Vol. 33, p. 299, "One Dinner a Week."

Even the City streets were clean as I pushed my way along them from the station miscalled "Mansion House," the station being in Cannon Street, while the Mansion House is not. So on reaching Aldgate Pump, which, if memory serves me rightly, once was famous in a farce, I decided to take neither a hansom nor a tram, but to walk like Mr. Weston and such heroes of the footpath, along the couple of miles or so which led to Salmon Lane.

Here I arrived at noon, and found the usual little crowd of Wednesday diners-out. All had their spoons and plates, and doubtless, too, their appetites; quite ready for the feast which was about to put some colour into their pale cheeks. Above a hundred entered while I stood at the door, and though I kept a sharp look-out, I declare I only noticed one good pair of boots. Three tiny little trots had scarce a pair of soles between them, and many a Baby Barefoot might have been observed. One little Cinderella came in a fancy costume, which looked as though it had been made of an old counterpane of patch-work, and I wished that some good fairy could have seen her wretched slippers, which were certainly transparent, though they were not made of glass. Then possibly the fairy might have waved her magic wand and have presented the poor child with a good strong pair of shoes. Ah, ladies of the West, who have children of your own, whom you delight to see well clad, will you sometimes spare a thought for these poor children of the East? When you think Miss Lucy's cloak is beginning to look shabby, or that Master Tommy's jacket is just a bit too small for him, or his boots a trifle tight—for he is such a growing boy, and his appetite so hearty, bless him!—will you kindly make a parcel of the raiment you discard and send it to the Cottage Mission Hall in Salmon Lane? Thus, at no great cost or trouble, you may assume the part of the benevolent good fairy, and by your performance for their benefit, confer much real comfort on many a little Jack and Jill, and Sue, and Cinderella, who are now so poorly clothed.

My guide was ready for a start, soon after his small guests had sung their usual grace. We left the lady-helpers all busy at their work, and enveloped in a cloud of incense as it were to the deity of dining, arising from the big tureens of fragrant, steaming stew. Alas! our nostrils had been filled with odours far less savoury

when, after three hours' travelling, we next entered the hall. There was, however, a faint smell of something like to cookery in the first house that we visited; faint, that is, when compared with the fine savour we had sniffed while the stew was being served. Still, the smell was quite as strong as one could well expect, when one had traced it to its source, and found that it proceeded from so very small a pot. This was slowly simmering on a fire which for its smallness must have been made to match. Despite its littleness, however, it made a bright spot in the room, which otherwise was sadly dull and dismal to the eye, and brought to mind a vision of the blue chamber in Blue Beard, for the walls were of that colour, excepting in the places where the plaster had peeled off. There was no cloth on the table and no carpet on the floor, and but a scanty show of crockery on the shelf. Signs of comfort there were none, though there was certainly a cat, whose presence often seems to give a room a cosy look. But pussy in this case looked sorely thin and careworn, as though mice were rather scarce. Near the ceiling, which was less than eight feet from the floor, there hung a poor little canary, imprisoned in a cage so small that it could hardly hop. As, during my whole visit, he stood silent on his perch, and neither sang nor even chirped a single note, perhaps the inference is fair that his life was not more cheerful than that of the cat—not to mention the six other usual inmates of the room.

Curiosity is vulgar and may be offensive; but I could not help confessing that I felt a little curious as to what was in the pot. "Three penn'orth of meat, penn'orth of potatoes, ha'porth of pot-herbs, and a pinch or so of salt." That was in the pot with about a quart of water; and that was the dinner for mother and two children—Joey, a small boy of twelve, and Jim, a biggish one of four; her other two to-day being guests in Salmon Lane. Mother is a comely, bright-eyed, civil-speaking woman, "forty-two last birthday," she says without reluctance, and hardly smiles when told that she looks younger than her age. Fifth of November is her birthday, remembers it by Guy Fawkes. Father's forty-eight. Gone to the hospital he is, because he's got hurt in the back. His birthday was yesterday. Oh no, sir, 'tweren't like that. Father didn't have no birthday jollification. Bless you, he's too poor to spend his money in a spree. You see, he's a

dock-labourer, and, now work is short, there's such a crowding at the gates. That's how he got jammed. A strongish man he is, too, but not being overfed, you see, a small hurt tells on him. Wages? Well, he earns two-and-elevenpence a day, when he can get full work, but there isn't one day out of three he gets it. Yes, I know there's many as works half-time 'cause they likes to. But he's not one to shirk or laze about in that way. There ain't a drop of idle blood in all his body, that there ain't.

Mother looks a little fierce as she says this, and her bright eyes gleam defiance of attack upon the absent. I divert her wrath by pointing to the sad want of repair which is apparent in the premises, and her anger blazes out at the mean greed of the landlord, whom she holds to blame.

"He won't do nothing, bless you; not spend a penny, he won't. Yes, the plaster's off the walls, and the floor is half in holes, and the roof it lets the rain in. But it's no good our complaining. House-room's precious scarce, although you wouldn't think it to see the miles there is of 'em. Four shillings a week we pay for our two rooms (which, except a staircase, is all the house contains), and if we were to leave he'd easy find another tenant."

Might we see where they slept? Why, yes, we might, and welcome. Mother briskly leads the way upstairs, and I, as briskly following, get a blow from a low beam, which sets my brain reflecting that a sudden rise in life is not unfraught with danger. The bed-chamber, we find, is of the same size as the sitting-room—or, shall I say, the parlour? for there were not many chairs in it—the floor, say, ten feet square, with seven feet to the ceiling. There are a couple of beds, both covered with coarse sackcloth, and neither showing sign of either sheet or blanket. The parents sleep in one and their four children in the other; and for the purposes of toilet there is an old cracked looking-glass. The floor is bare, the walls are blue, the ceiling rain-discoloured; there is neither chair, nor table, nor clothes-closet, nor washing-stand. I presume there is a pump somewhere handy in the neighbourhood, but, as far as I can see, there is nothing in the house to serve the purpose of ablution.

Returning to the parlour—or, shall I say, the kitchen?—I remark upon the damp which stains the corner by the cupboard. The last tenant, it seems, had used this closet as a dog-kennel. and had

left it rather disagreeably over-populated and sorely needing disinfection. Assuming for the nonce the part of sanitary inspector, I go behind the house, and there I find a small enclosure, wherein, if one may judge from the filth which lies a-festering, any rubbish may be shot, and no count be taken of the shooting. A heap of this lay piled against the wall whose dampness I had noticed, and I proclaim my opinion that the vestry ought to see to it. "They won't do nothing," says mother; "not if you goes on your knees to 'em. Why, yes, it do smell bad at times, but there, it's no use our complaining. The landlord 'ud soon turn us out if he caught us a-grumbling. How long has it been wet? Well, mostly since last winter. Ah yes, Mr. Austin, when I think how those three children were all took away so sudden, one after another, somehow it's my belief the dampness might ha' done it. Yes, sir, they all died in a fortnight; leastways, in fifteen days they did. Oh no, sir, they wasn't the last tenant's [for she had told the tale so calmly that I put the question]. My own children they was, now weren't they, Mr. Austin? An' they all died last April. An' a jolly good cry I had when they was took. An' I've had many a cry since. But there, crying ain't no good. Poor little souls, maybe they're happy now they're dead, an' whiles they lived I know they hadn't much to make 'em happy."

While she is telling me this tragedy, I see that mother's bright eyes look a little dim, and there is a something in her voice which is like a smothered sob. But I can detect no other sign of sorrow. I indeed might fancy that she hardly felt her recent loss. However, I know better, from having in my life had some acquaintance with poor people. Any one who knows them knows how great is their endurance of the arrows of affliction, and how little they indulge in the luxury of grief. "I wouldn't wish him back, though," added a poor mother, after telling me how fever had just killed her only boy. "He's better where he is, I'm pretty sure of that, sir; and though I were main proud of him, I wouldn't wish him back."

The first halt in my travelling had been in a Court, and the next was in a Place. There was nothing very courtly in the court, or princely in the place—although they both alike bore the title of the Regent, whose memory be blest. The scene of court-life I had witnessed prepared me for one similar: but I found one noorer still.

In this royally-named quarter all the houses look alike—small square boxes of bad brickwork, a score of feet or so in height, with one room on the first floor—there seldom is a second—and one room on the ground. In the brick-box we next visited there lived in the ground room a widow with her family, and she for one-and-ninepence weekly let the top room to another widow and her family, on whom we came to call. But it is not quite so easy to make calls in the East as it is in the West. When the mistress is away, it often happens there is nobody to answer at the door. This was so when we arrived, and we were puzzled for admittance as there was neither bell, nor knocker, nor handle to the door. Presently, however, there came a little child who had been dining at the Hall, and she speedily produced the handle from its hiding-place, and gave us entrance to her home. Here was no cat, no canary, no gleam of feeble firelight to enliven the sad gloom. The bed had not been made, there was indeed no bed to make. It is true there was a bedstead and some bits of sacking on it, all huddled in a heap; but to have "made" it into a bed would have puzzled any housemaid who wished to do the work. Two chairs, a small deal table, and a sack half-filled with straw, were the only other furniture, except a broken fender; and this seemed a real luxury, for had there been a fire, it could have proved of little use. A big bundle of new sailcloth lay on the small table, which was further occupied by a hank or two of rope-yarn; so that its service as a work-table, much more than as a dinner-table, was, by these encumbrances, made present to the mind. Grandmother and mother were employed in making hammocks. Stiffish work it seemed, too, for the cloth was hard to sew. They could earn four-and-sixpence by making half-a-score, which was as much as ever one could manage in a week. The worst of it was that they lost much precious time in walking to the workshop, where they drilled the eyelet-holes, which they could not do at home.

The little girl had hastened home to get on with her "splicings." These she made with the tarred yarn, whereof her fingers bore the trace. A toughish job it was, for hands so thin and weak. Making twenty pairs for sixpence, she could earn three shillings a week. But did she never go to school? Oh yes; she had been pretty regular since Christmas, till just now.

Mother thought it mightn't matter if she kept away a bit, now work was coming in, for it had been so very slack. Home-work or school-work, which did she prefer? for it appeared that the poor child had seldom any chance of the alternative of play. Oh, she liked home-work the best, she answered rather quickly, as though there could not be a doubt. But surely it was harder? Oh yes; it certainly was harder, but then it brought in something, and mother was so poor.

A pleasant, civil-speaking, pretty, sad-eyed little maiden she appeared as she stood by me, enlightening my ignorance of the commerce of the East. Thirteen on her next birthday, although seeing her small limbs I should have guessed her two years less. There was a shy smile on her lips as she corrected my mistake in supposing that she had to sleep somewhere on the floor. Oh no; grandmother and mother, they both slept on the bed, and she slept at their feet, and there were the three children, and they lay on the floor. Yes, they all three slept together on the sack down in the corner there, between the bedstead and the wall. Clearly the little woman hardly thought herself a child; she probably was nursemaid, if not housekeeper and cook. Clearly, too, the children had not grown very big, for the sack whereon they slept was barely a yard wide. But, I could not help reflecting, six to sleep in that small room, and two of the six certainly, if not three nearly, adults! Perhaps for sake of warmth overcrowding might be pardoned, if it were not hurtful to health. But here the bedroom was a workshop, and the little air there was in it must have well-nigh been exhausted before the day was done. Still, there were six to sleep in it, and but one bed for three of them, and for the other three a sack. And had they nothing for a covering? "Oh yes, sir," the little girl replied, "we have our clothes." Clothes! Poor little child! Were a bitterfrost to come, her clothes would hardly give much comfort. All she wore was a thin jacket pinned together at the throat, and a scanty skirt beneath, and a crippled pair of boots; and, as far as could be seen, a pair of cotton socks were all the linen she possessed.

Had she ever had a doll? or tasted a plum-pudding? or gathered a wild primrose? or been taken to a pantomime? Many a query like to these I felt inclined to ask of this hard-working little maiden, who had answered very prettily in a soft

and gentle voice the many questions I had put. But there were her splicings to be done, and we were taking up her time, and she could ill-afford to waste the only money she possessed. To make up for the precious minutes she had lost in telling us her story, I slipped something in her hand while bidding her good-bye; and from the stare which it attracted, and the smile which quickly followed, I came to the conclusion that a coin not made of copper is not a common gift to a poor child in the East.

Here for the present I must pause, for I have filled the space assigned to me. They who would hear further of what happened in my course of Eastern travel will do me the favour to wait until next week. Before I close, however, I may correct an error which crept into my last paper. I there stated that poor workers in the East who lived by making match-boxes received a shilling a gross, providing their own paste. This may well seem labour at starvation point, but the wage is five-fold greater than the rate now current. Twopence-farthing for twelve dozen is the present market-price, including cost of paste and time consumed in making it. In fact, by daily slaving for some nine hours at a stretch a woman in a week can barely earn two shillings. I am told of one sad case where father, mother, and seven children by their collective labour manage to earn a shilling a day, and put food in their nine mouths by the profit of their work.

GEORGIE: AN ARTIST'S LOVE.

A STORY IN SIX CHAPTERS. CHAPTER I.

MISS MYRA THOMPSON was an artistically inclined young lady with æsthetic tastes. She was clever and—her friends added—conceited; but her mother, who (metaphorically) sat at her feet and worshipped from this respectful distance, put it differently. She said that Myra was conscious of superior intellect, and then, mother-like, defending this assertion before anyone had time to dispute it, she would add:

“And why not? A beautiful woman is not found fault with for a knowledge of her beauty! Why, if Myra felt a superiority to girls of her age, and to such frivolous amusements as lawn-tennis or waltzing—if she felt that she understood great poets with a certain penetrating clearness denied to the general run of mankind, and not always the gift of the said great poets

themselves—why,” would repeat this fond mother, “should she not feel intellectually above, if not altogether apart from, her neighbours?”

Mrs. Thompson gave utterance to these and to similar remarks while administering afternoon-tea to her friends and acquaintances in her small æsthetic drawing-room in the Bayswater district. Myra would often be absent on these occasions, copying at the National Gallery, or assisting at some debating or literary society.

She had as yet favoured the world with no printed exposition of her sentiments, but her tastes were literary—indeed, one of her ambitions, not by any means the most aspiring, was to obtain a readership.

And—to quote Mrs. Thompson again—although so young (Myra was twenty-two), her powers of criticism were marvellous.

Nobody contradicted her. The Thompsons were poor, but in their small circle of more or less commonplace people, the mother and daughter were rather looked up to and talked about.

Mrs. Thompson, a pretty, fair woman with languid, graceful movements, and with a remembrance of better days, was the more popular of the two. Women were somewhat frightened of Myra, and men were more frightened still. So, although she received a fair share of admiration from the sterner sex, no member of it had ventured—even supposing him to have had the inclination, which is doubtful, bearing in mind the wholesome dislike men have to anything approaching to superiority in their womankind—to express his admiration in the form of a proposal.

Myra looked forward to a life of single blessedness with a sufficient amount of equanimity. It is true that she was poor, and full of æsthetic dislike to poverty, but she held herself above marrying a man for the amount of the balance at his banker's, and among these commonplace nineteenth-century men, where was to be found a Crichton admirable enough to satisfy the requirements of a Miss Thompson?

He must be a most determined democrat, and at the same time refined and highly cultured; he must be by no means a lady's man, and yet full of chivalrous respect for woman; he must be intellectual, and know not conceit.

Myra at times aired very democratic opinions; she had for heroes such men as the First Consul, Victor Hugo, Gambetta, and Parnell. On one occasion, after giving

vent to ideas of almost dynamite tendency, she had left the window in disgust, because some common people were making merry in too close proximity to her artistic surroundings; it had jarred on her æsthetic sense of the fitness of things. Mrs. Thompson had been present.

She had since been less alarmed at the seditious sentiments of her Radical daughter.

It was a cold day early in November. Poor London! declared on scientific authority to be overshadowed on the brightest summer's day by a hazy blanket of smoke; it does not exact much faith in science to believe in the thickness or in the yellowness of the blanket which descends upon you, and swathes you with such mistaken kindness through the greater part of the winter months.

On the particular day I am writing about, one could go on one's way without the aid of a will-o'-the-wisp in the mortal shape of a small boy dodging erratically about you with a promiscuous torch liable to sudden extinction. There was also no particular danger of being run over by some be-fogged omnibus, or of braining oneself against the nearest lamp-post. The worst behaviour of the fog on this day was to produce a smarting sensation in the eyes, and a peculiar taste in the mouth, not to be experienced anywhere but in London. It is one of the advantages—there are several—that we have over foreigners.

Mrs. Thompson was sitting by the fire. Afternoon-tea and an opened letter were on a small table by her side. She was wrapped in a pale blue knitted shawl, but this covering failed to keep out the cold water which was, figuratively speaking, running down her back. In common with most of our delightfully-built suburban villas, it was quite possible to sit almost on the dogs of that high-art fireplace and there to suffer the extremes of heat and cold, it being only possible to scorch one side at a time.

The cosy was on the teapot; it was terra-cotta in colour, and the flowers thereon had been designed by Myra, and worked by her mother. It was keeping the tea hot for the former, who was expected home every moment from the National Gallery. Mrs. Thompson was rather restlessly awaiting her daughter's arrival. That foreign-looking letter lying by the untouched tea will be the subject of discussion, of possible dissension between them, and she wished it were over.

In every household under the sun, I believe, there is some particular he or she, who, by force of superior strength of mind, or of will, or of intellect, or sometimes by mere selfishness or bad temper, takes as it were the first place, whose opinion is the one which carries with it the most weight, and whose wishes are the only ones which decide.

In that little household of two, Myra, from the time she could walk, and even before this interesting period, had occupied this happy position.

Mrs. Thompson poked the fire somewhat nervously—a poker is a resource not confined to Englishmen of the lower classes who have provoking wives—she had heard the opening of the little iron gate which enclosed the small make-believe of a garden, and then the sharp, decided click of the latchkey. She rang the bell; the result of which proceeding was that Miss Myra Thompson and Ruth, the maid-of-all-work, appeared on the threshold simultaneously.

"Bring up some hot buttered-toast, Ruth, nice and hot, just as Miss Myra likes it."

Ruth vanished from the scene with a not too well pleased expression of countenance, and Miss Myra came up to the fire.

She knew already that something was the matter, and that the hot buttered-toast was to be administered in the way of consolation, or, if matters were not so bad as to need consolation, at any rate for soothing purposes.

"What is it, mother? Money? Has Mr. Green written?"

Mr. Green was Mrs. Thompson's lawyer.

The girl spoke a little wearily; it was such an old story—that want of money. She was standing straight and tall, looking into the fire and pulling off her gloves. She was five feet seven, but did not look her height. Nature had given her absolutely perfect proportions—one of the rarest of her gifts, by the way; so rare, indeed, that it takes some amount of artistic training to be able to appreciate it.

Her features were short and finely cut, and she wore her thick dark hair short to her head like a boy; it was soft and curly, and made a becoming frame to the handsome, somewhat peculiar style of face; her eyes were black and a little hard-looking. Her hat was of black velvet, large, home-made, and picturesque.

She was decidedly a striking-looking girl, too much so, one would have thought, to have gone about London alone; but she

had never met with any greater annoyance than now and then a little persistent staring—a penalty that every good-looking woman has to pay. As a rule, they soon get accustomed to it, and submit to it with the proverbial sweetness of their sex.

"No, it is not money—money has nothing to do with it, or at least not in the way you think."

The toast had come up; Myra had taken off her hat and had made herself comfortable.

"If money has anything to do with it, it can't be anything pleasant," said the girl with her twenty years' experience of never having had quite enough to make both ends meet comfortably.

"Do you remember hearing me talk of my old schoolfellow, Katie Milne, who made such a good match, and then was left a widow?"

"Yes," said Myra after a moment's reflection. "Was she not dreadfully silly? drove her husband out of his mind almost—hastened his death, anyway?"

This was not a promising beginning, especially as Mrs. Thompson had to admit the truth of this somewhat uncomplimentary sketch of her old companion.

"Well," she continued desperately, "this letter is from her, and—— But perhaps you had better read it."

"Oh no, please," cried Myra, catching sight of the thin, closely-written sheets. "Surely it is not necessary to wade through all that. Do condense the unpleasantness, whatever it may be, and let us have it over."

"I am afraid you will think it rather a nuisance," said Mrs. Thompson, still weakly beating about the bush. "I know you don't like people in the house, but it's so romantic meeting her old lover again, and then being obliged to go out to Australia, and all——"

"Mother, mother," interrupted the girl, "who is going to Australia? And if they are going to Australia, why do you say I shall not like them to come here?"

"It is her little girl, but she is grown-up now;" and then Mrs. Thompson endeavoured to be more lucid and to explain how Mrs. Rickards had lately been pardoned by her cousin, Harold Sparkes, whom she had jilted years ago to marry the now defunct Mr. Rickards, a rich tea-broker, and how that this same Harold Sparkes was in an advanced stage of consumption—not brought on by his cousin's cruelty, for he had been engaged on and

off continually since then—that in spite of this the wedding was to take place immediately, and the honeymoon, by the doctor's advice, was to be spent in a sailing trip to Australia. The only impediment to all these delightful arrangements was the existence of a little daughter of seventeen, who had been knocking about with her still young widowed mother on the Continent from the age of five, when her father had died; but whose absence at any rate for those six months of honeymoon was more to be desired than her presence.

"And so," finished Mrs. Thompson, "Kate proposes that she, her daughter, should come to us until the spring. She offers one hundred pounds a year."

"This is the first time for years that Mrs. Rickards has taken the slightest notice of you, is it not?" asked Myra coldly; and then, after a short uncomfortable silence: "I suppose you would like to have this girl, would you not?"

"It would be a kindness, and the terms are liberal," replied her mother; "indeed, Kate has made so sure of my consent that she has enclosed the first quarter in advance. But, Myra, if you dislike the idea too much I will not make you utterly miserable. I can refuse, of course."

But this was said rather faintly, and indeed, truth to tell, Mrs. Thompson was already looking forward to many small luxuries to be procured by means of that unexpected twenty-five pounds.

"It will not make me utterly miserable, although I do dislike the idea of a third person in our small house," answered the girl with her usual candour. "I dislike also the idea of giving up my studio, as of course I must."

Mrs. Thompson eagerly protested against this being a necessity, proposing first that Miss Rickards should be put in a small attic at the top of the house—next to Ruth, and then that she—Mrs. Thompson—should give up her own room to the new comer, and go upstairs herself.

But Myra's common-sense and unselfishness won the day, and the studio, scarcely ever used in the winter on account of the extra fire this would entail, was to be converted into a bedroom forthwith.

"What is her name, and when is she coming?" asked the girl as she gathered up her things preparatory to going to her room.

"Georgie—Georgie Rickards. She will be at Victoria at a little after ten on Saturday morning."

CHAPTER II.

MYRA was standing by her easel, sufficiently near the window to see out, and sufficiently far therefrom to remove any impression that she might possibly be so doing.

Her mother had gone to meet Miss Rickards, had been gone since a little after nine; it was then almost eleven. In all probability she had not long to wait before seeing the girl whom she could not help regarding in the light of an intruder.

"I am sure she will find it very dull after her life of Continental boarding-houses and hotels; she will want to drag us about, and I hate that sort of thing unless one can afford to do it comfortably." So Myra had spoken at the breakfast-table to her mother, and she was still thinking these thoughts as she stepped back from time to time to get a better view of the background she was finishing.

To wonder about the personal appearance of the new comer had not occurred to her. Myra was as little vain as it is possible for a good-looking woman to be, and whereas the first question with most women, when another member of their sex is on the tapis, would be, "Is she pretty?" Myra would probably speculate as to whether she were more than ordinarily stupid or commonplace.

A cab drew up; Ruth went down to fetch umbrellas and rugs; the inevitable discussion took place with the driver, and also with a gaunt, hollow-cheeked individual who had apparently bereft himself of the better half of his breath in a wild chase after Miss Rickards's numerous boxes. The cabman and this outsider began by abusing each other, and then, upon Mrs. Thompson refusing to pay a shilling more than the right fare, became amical, and abused Mrs. Thompson.

Myra stayed where she was.

Presently the door opened to admit her mother and a small, slim girl in an ulster and French-looking toque.

"Here she is," said Mrs. Thompson, rather unnecessarily, perhaps. "Georgie, this is my daughter Myra."

Georgie came up to the taller girl and greeted her in a pretty, warm, rather un-English way.

"I hope you don't mind my coming," she said; "it is very kind of you. Mamma did not know a bit what to do with me."

And then, perhaps not finding Myra very responsive, she turned to the elder lady and kissed her.

Mrs. Thompson glanced a little nervously at her daughter. She knew Myra's dislike to anything demonstrative, and then she patted the girl's soft cheek and told her not to be silly, that they were both very glad to see her—and had she not better go upstairs and make herself comfortable while Ruth got some breakfast ready for her?

Myra offered to show her the way, and the two girls left the room together.

After an absence of about five minutes Myra returned alone.

"Well?" said Mrs. Thompson, as she gave a few touches to the arrangement of the table. "Well, what do you think of her?"

"I know nothing whatever about her," answered Myra, going back to her easel.

"But her appearance?"

"Oh, she is a pretty little thing, rather childish looking; not much in her, I should say."

"She reminds me a little of what Kate used to be," said Mrs. Thompson reflectively; "but her eyes are better. Georgie's eyes are lovely—I don't know if you have remarked them—and so blue."

Mrs. Thompson came of a family of brown eyes. Her husband's had been brown, Myra's were black, and so this gentle lady's admiration for blue, grey, or even green in eyes was easily to be accounted for, and was only another proof of the love of change inherent in us all.

Myra smiled slightly, but made no direct answer. The last time Mrs. Thompson had been enthusiastic about personal beauty was over the shape of a cook's nose. The cook had ended very badly.

"I suppose Miss Rickards won't mind going away for Christmas? Did you tell her of our arrangements?" she asked presently.

"No, not yet; but I don't think Georgie is the sort of girl to mind anything."

As she spoke Georgie appeared. She looked even more childish without her hat; her golden-brown hair was floating round her small face in untidy, fluffy curls; her eyes, which had caught and kept the colour of skies unknown to England, looked out from beneath their dark lashes with a child's bright frankness. Indeed, bright was the only adjective that properly described Georgie Rickards. On reflection, however, one must admit that this implies a good deal that is pleasant.

Mrs. Thompson was conscious of the charm already. It was certain that this girl would never say anything half as clever

as were some of Myra's remarks, but then for days together Myra was wrapped in gloomy silence, or else making reflections on life and things in general, as depressing as they were unanswerable.

Myra need have been under no apprehension that Miss Rickards would object to leaving London for Christmas, for although she could even extract some little amusement from a dense yellow fog, and was childishly elated at the necessity of breakfasting by gaslight, she was equally charmed at the prospect of going out of town for a month at the beginning of December.

"I have always heard so much of an English Christmas in the country," she said gleefully, while visions of yule-logs, holly, mistletoe, and men in shooting-jackets or red coats floated before her brain.

Myra hastened to dispel any misleading notions.

"It is not to a country-house full of people that we are going. You must not expect any balls, or indeed amusement of any sort. We are just going into lodgings, that is all."

"You see, dear," explained Mrs. Thompson in a slightly deprecatory tone, for she had seen the momentary falling of the girl's face, "we generally take our outing in the winter. Myra so hates the fogs, and they are always very bad about Christmas."

Georgie agreed, and fell into the plans of an early flitting to Lyme Regis with almost all her usual brightness.

However, Myra was not convinced, and she expressed her dissatisfaction to her mother after Georgie had gone up to bed.

"I am sure Georgie dislikes the idea most thoroughly, and really, mother, if we had not made all our arrangements—you see, paying what she does, she has no right to be made uncomfortable. It is a hateful business, and we could have come across no girl more unsuited to our mode of life, in every possible way."

Mrs. Thompson murmured something about Miss Rickards's sweetness of disposition.

"Yes, she is a nice little thing in her way, but it is not our way. Don't you see, mother? Can't you understand how painfully dull she will find it after the life she has been leading abroad?"

"She does not give one the impression of finding it dull," said Mrs. Thompson, but speaking not at all in the decided tone of her daughter.

"Miss Rickards will have been here a week to-morrow," was Myra's answer. "Things are still new to her; she has shopping to do, and all that sort of thing," rather contemptuously. "But Lyme Regis! where there is nothing but the beauty of the scenery and the sunsets. No, mother, depend upon it, Georgie Rickards is the sort of girl who cannot be really happy if she has not a man to flirt with. As far as I can make out, she has done nothing else since she was five years old. It is outrageous to have a girl of that kind thrust upon one! We shall all be miserable shut up in that old farmhouse together."

Poor Mrs. Thompson looked rather miserable already. Why did her clever daughter insist upon feeling things so deeply? No doubt Georgie was not averse to flirtation. No girl was about whom Mrs. Thompson knew anything, except Myra, but then Myra was a genius, and consequently an exception to all feminine rules—her feelings were too deep for mere flirtation.

The simple lady lay awake some considerable time that night, reflecting on the awfulness and intensity of Myra's capacity for loving, if ever awakened. She had always given her daughter credit for hidden feelings of a strength and profoundness that it would be perhaps as well not to investigate too closely in these shallow, pleasure-loving days.

The three ladies were seated at that sort of nondescript meal, high tea, so dear to their sex. Men as a rule energetically avoid it; they are so much more careful of their digestions than are their weaker sisters.

The tea was laid in a room whose only attraction was its view of the Lyme Regis bay; this attraction being then shut out with the aid of a green blind and red merino curtains. One perforce admired the diplomacy of little Mrs. Wright, the landlady, who always led new arrivals straight to the window, and there expatiated on the beauties of Nature.

The broad stretch of sea, the tall white cliffs, the irregular steep descent of houses, imprinted themselves on the mind, and one more easily overlooked the rickety sofa, and the chairs covered in glaring cheap cretonne, each flower thereon a separate eyesore to an artistic mind.

How Myra supported the yearly infliction of such surroundings somewhat perplexed her mother—Myra, who was known

to shudder at an undecorated piano-back, and who discoursed at length about what she called "expanses of ugliness."

Alas! this room was nothing better than an expanse of ugliness in itself. Let Miss Thompson turn her eyes where she would, there was anguish and desolation of spirit for this disciple of the beautiful, on every side.

Whether it was owing to that, or to more remote causes, on that particular evening Myra was depressed, or, in plainer words, decidedly cross. Mrs. Thompson was tired and shaken with the long omnibus journey from Axminster (Lyme Regis is still unspoilt by railway). Georgie was too hungry to do much beyond eating—between whiles she wondered a little at superior people's manner of enjoying themselves.

She admired Myra immensely, she had never seen anyone quite like her before, and was ready to give her as much hero-worship as this somewhat peculiar young lady would receive at her hands. But at the same time, she could not help wondering now and again at some of Myra's remarks and proceedings. She often wondered aloud, much to the annoyance of Miss Thompson, who often detected hidden irony in George's most innocent speeches.

Her hunger being somewhat appeased, Georgie made one of them, breaking a long silence.

"We seem to have brought the fog with us," she said cheerfully.

She addressed no one in particular, but Myra felt called upon to defend her chosen winter abode. She spoke with some severity:

"It is not a fog, as anyone but a child could see. It is a sea-mist—quite another thing. It is very healthy."

"It is rather dense to-night," said the elder lady; "but I assure you, Georgie, it is quite the exception here. The climate is charming, as even you, spoilt as you are for England, will be obliged to own; will she not, Myra?"

But Myra made no reply. She got up and went over to a somewhat smoky fire, which she gave a vicious poke. She was most thoroughly put out. She hated travelling second-class; she held omnibuses in detestation; and, like most people, even quite commonplace ones, was averse to being thwarted in her arrangements. All these things had befallen her, and in an aggravated form.

In the omnibus, smaller and narrower

than those in London she will walk any distance rather than avail herself of, she had been cramped about the limbs, and generally shaken, in company with three or four sturdy country-women, smelling of onions, and worthy of England in the unpicturesqueness of their attire. That she might have borne by shutting her eyes and letting her mind dwell on something beautiful—a picture of Burne Jones or a poem of Browning. Unfortunately, the closing of her eyes had not been so easy a matter. In spite of her most heroic efforts, her mother had allowed one of those objectionable, inartistic, onion-eating fellow-creatures to enter into a detailed account of her life, and, when that was finished, the family history of several of her neighbours.

There was something about Mrs. Thompson which inspired confidence to an almost unlimited degree in such people as cab-drivers, railway-porters, and beggars, in fact, as Myra said, in the breasts of the great unwashed at large. Miss Thompson had never been able to quite exonerate her mother from blame in the matter.

"People never come to me, mother, with histories of their lives," she had remarked more than once.

But Mrs. Thompson had only smiled, and declared it was all owing to a want of firmness in the outline of her nose.

The climax to Miss Thompson's woes was the impossibility of having for studio a small room with the only good north light in the house. The peculiar bitterness of the matter was that the person who had appropriated what she had almost come to look upon as her own, was an artist. She told herself she could have endured it better had he been a doctor, pedlar, tinker—anything but that. Mrs. Wright had been eloquent, too, in his behalf. Myra thought it vulgar to listen to the praises of an unmarried man. The landlady had enlarged on the fact of his being quite the gentleman, although he was an artist. She had even volunteered the remark that she was sure he would not be the one to hinder such a young lady as Miss Myra from anything she had set her heart on, and that—But Myra had cut her short, and begged that no word on the subject of the studio might be said to the artist.

Mrs. Wright had promised, holding out, as consolation to Myra, that the gentleman might be going any day, "only that he is that distracted and dreamy like, there's no real calculation possible."

Myra had listened in silence. She was

most thoroughly annoyed, and her annoyance was not diminished by an inward conviction that the presence of this unlooked-for lodger was, from different motives, by no means so disagreeable to her companions as to herself.

After venting her feelings to some small extent on the coals, Myra declared it would have been better not to have left London this year, and suggested staying only a week, returning to Bayswater for Christmas.

But Mrs. Thompson, who had left certain instructions at home as to the taking-up of carpets, rubbing-down of walls, etc., opposed this measure with unwonted decision.

"Besides, really, Myra, it is only for a few days. This artist, whoever he may be, is, you see, expected to leave almost at any moment. I can't see any sufficient reason for being so put out."

"Paul Rentoul," said Georgie, coming up and kneeling down in front of the fire, where, thanks to Myra, there was a small struggling flame. "Such a pretty name! I am sure he is nice, and an artist! You ought to be pleased, Myra."

"Then I am not what I ought to be," said Miss Thompson rather shortly. "Might I enquire how you come to know his name already? We have not been in the house for more than an hour."

"I saw a letter on the hall-table as I went upstairs; of course it can be for no one else."

"Rentoul!" repeated Mrs. Thompson; "and an artist! Is not that the name of Linda Watts's cousin, the one she is always talking about?"

"I dare say—yes—very likely; how excessively tiresome! We may have to be civil to him," said Myra impatiently. "And from what Linda says, I believe him to be intensely conceited. My holiday will be completely spoiled; he is sure to be sketching the very bits I want. I can see we have a most wretched month before us."

And with this gloomy, Cassandra-like utterance, Miss Thompson left the room, and was seen no more for the night.

It was three days later; the mist which had persistently covered everything as with a soft white shroud had vanished—whether it had been swallowed up by the sea to which, according to Myra, it owed its birth, or whether it had gone the way of ordinary fogs, is not for us to determine, and is, after all, of secondary importance.

There was only one thing to be done

with such a blue sky, such sunshine, such delicious, invigorating crispness in the air, and that was to make the most of it.

Myra, English born and bred, comprehended this. She came down to breakfast in all the paraphernalia of ulster, thick boots, and sketching apparatus.

"I shall make a day of it, mother, if I can have some sandwiches; it is so tiresome to have to disturb oneself for meals."

"My dear, how imprudent at this time of the year! You are certain to catch cold;" and Mrs. Thompson shivered a little at the mere idea, drawing her inevitable shawl closer round her.

"I am going along the Undercliff; you know how sheltered it always is there—besides, I never catch cold. You might bring Georgie later, in time to see the sunset. We could all come home together. Where is Georgie, by the way? Not down yet?"

As she spoke, the door opened, and Georgie entered. Myra looked at her with a certain amount of artistic pleasure. She wore one of her pretty Paris dresses; it was greeny-brown in colour, and over this she had pinned a turkey-red art apron, copied from one of Miss Thompson's. Her golden-tinted hair was untidily picturesque, her blue eyes sparkling; she seemed part of the brightness of the morning. She made a pretty little apology for being late, and then taking in Myra's attire, asked:

"So you are going out sketching as well?"

"As well?" repeated Myra, but with an instinctive knowledge of what was coming.

"Yes, he has gone; I saw him from my window—I had such a good view—I leant right out. He is nice-looking, but—old."

During this speech, Georgie had put sugar in her tea, helped herself to the goodly wholesome-looking Devonshire butter, and otherwise ministered to her inner wants. She did not notice Myra's look of disgust. Mrs. Thompson did, and hastened to interpose:

"Leant right out, dear? I hope Mr. Rentoul—for of course it is he you are talking about—did not see you?"

"No, of course not," answered Georgie sweetly; "I waited until he was quite a long way off—nearly up the hill."

"I knew it!" exclaimed Myra almost tragically. "He has gone to the Undercliff!" After a pause: "Old, do you say, Georgie—is he grey?"

The younger girl laughed.

"Oh, not so old as that, but grave. a

pointed beard, uncommon-looking—about forty, I should think."

"If he is Linda's cousin he is not much over thirty," said Mrs. Thompson. "I dare say you did not see him very well after all, Georgie."

Here the matter dropped, and Myra departed with her sandwiches, but with the firm resolve to come back at once if the objectionable artist was in possession of her Undercliff.

Mrs. Thompson suggested that she and Georgie should go out and enjoy a little sea air, but Georgie begged to finish a book she was reading first, and Mrs. Thompson, never unwilling to stay by the fire, did not press the invitation.

The girl took her book to a wide low window seat, half-way up the old oak staircase.

There she curled herself up in the sunshine, and was soon lost to outer things.

The staircase at Holy Mount is the only original part that is left of what was once a fine old house. In the time of Charles the First it had belonged to the Heatherstones, an old Royalist family famed for the beauty of its women and the licentiousness of its men. Later on the last of the race had fallen at Sedgemoor, fighting for Monmouth. The old place had gradually fallen into decay and had been sold, partly rebuilt and patched up, and converted into a girls' school. Since then it had fallen lower still. Those little white cards, with "Apartments" printed thereon, which were to be seen in conspicuous parts of the windows, announced but too plainly its degradation.

That blackened oaken staircase! What memories must it not possess of days gone by!—those days when old Sir Carver Heatherstone, and his sons after him, entertained there the beauty and the wickedness of the Court. What tales those steps might tell, of rustling silken dresses sweeping over them, of little feet in high-heeled shoes, and the clanking of sword and spur! Must they not have been the discreet witnesses of many a stolen meeting, or soft whisper, or Court intrigue? Ah, if they could but speak! But perhaps after all it is well that speech is denied them. No one takes to reverses kindly, and even those old oaken steps might say bitter, sour things we should not care to listen to.

Georgie had finished her book, and sat

idle in the sunshine. She was not thinking of the old staircase and its possible memories or regrets. If she was guilty of any distinct thought at that moment it was that it was very pleasant and warm, but that it would be still more pleasant to have some one to talk to—some one nice. Mr. Rentoul for instance! She got up, and standing on the low window-sill looked out. Up the steep white road, and across the fields, she had a view of both ways of getting to the Undercliff. There was no one in sight. Neither of the artists had apparently as yet frightened the other away.

She gave a little sigh, and then bethought her of Mrs. Thompson's offer to go out. She could change her novel, at any rate. She wondered what the time was. Standing there in indecision, a strong and dreadful inclination came into her small head. The balustrade to that ancient staircase was broad, and shiny with the touch of many thousands of hands. How nice it would be to slide down it! Should she? There was no one to see her. She hesitated, and being a woman was naturally lost. She scrambled up, arranged her petticoats as gracefully as might be—she was off. As she reached the bottom an outer door creaked, there was the sound of voices, and a man and woman, both tall, both with portfolios, entered the inner hall.

Miss Rickards got down in hot haste, she grew red to the roots of her hair, and stood before them a miserable study of shamed consciousness.

Myra just said, "Georgie!" The tone was expressive. She then went through a form of introduction. "I have met Mr. Rentoul—I find we have many mutual friends—Miss Rickards."

Georgie bowed, but did not dare to look up and read all the disgust she was sure must be written on the artist's face. She murmured something unintelligible, and hastened to seek refuge with Mrs. Thompson.

"What a fine old staircase it is," remarked Mr. Rentoul, as Georgie disappeared. "I had no idea of its artistic merit until just now."

And then he went up to his room, while Myra went to tell her mother that Mr. Rentoul was Linda's cousin; that for a man he was not unbearably conceited, nor yet an utter fool, and that he was coming to call on Mrs. Thompson that afternoon.

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

A DRAWN GAME.

BY BASIL.

AUTHOR OF "LOVE THE DEBT," ETC.

CHAPTER XXII. FOOLISH KISSES.

AT the close of the concert there was a rush for the train, into which, as it was the last, all strove to get at once. Dick only, with extreme difficulty and at the last moment, gained a third-class compartment, got his aunt into it, and was turning to hand in Ida, when a sudden surge of the crowd swept her backwards out of reach, and would have swept him away with her but for his hold of the handle of the carriage. Ida, borne away by the surging crowd, helpless as a feather on the tide, was brought to a sudden stand by a strong arm flung round her waist. She looked up to recognise Archie with a sudden pleasure, which he would have given the right arm that held her to know of.

"All right!" he shouted to Dick; "join you at Ryecote."

Dick didn't think it all right at all; but as, if he trusted himself again in the crowd, he would almost certainly have lost his aunt without recovering Ida, he submitted sulkily to fate, and followed Mrs. Tuck into the carriage.

"You're not frightened?" said Archie in a tender tone of protection that thrilled Ida.

"Frightened!" she echoed, looking up at him with trustful eyes.

"If you'll allow me to keep my arm round you, we shall manage it."

Truly Ida was not in the least inclined to cry, "Unhand me, sirrah!" Still, they didn't manage it, since it was unmanageable. The railway authorities finding it impossible to pack fifteen hundred passengers into a train calculated to hold six hundred, were forced to marshal what

carriages they could muster into a relief special. Meantime they dispatched the first, containing Dick and his aunt, while Ida and Archie had to wait for the second. They got at last into a second-class compartment, which being in the rear of the train, was not uncomfortably crowded.

"It's always safest to be in the last carriage of the last train," said Archie jocosely; "you can't be run into, and if you run in you're farthest from the shock."

"Were you ever in an accident, Archie?"

It was pleasant to Ida to think and talk as though the old times had come back.

"Yes, twice; and both times I was with Ben on the engine. We were running north, down Retford Bank under steam, at between forty and fifty miles an hour, when we saw a goods going east from Sheffield to Lincoln, right across our line at the level crossing. He couldn't stop in time, so what do you think Ben did?" he asked with boyish gusto.

"Put on the brake?"

"Put on the steam. 'Hold fast, my lad!' he said to me, as coolly as I say it now, while he opened the regulator to the full, and the engine leaped forward like a lion on its prey, and went clean through the goods, as through a paper-hoop. I hardly felt the shock, and not a passenger in the train knew he'd been in collision. Then, as he eased the engine a bit, Ben said to me in just the same tone, and as though in continuation, 'Them goods braid of* women, Master Archie. They're allus in t' road; an' if thee tries to parley-vous wi' 'em an' that, thee'rt knocked ovver, sewer as a gun.

* "Braid of"—i.e. are like.

There's nowt for it but to clear 'em clean aat o' gait.' And he was right, too. I mean as regards the goods, not the other baggage," said Archie smiling. "If he'd slowed instead of sharpening the pace, and so struck the goods with less force, he'd have knocked the waggons over, instead of cutting through them, and probably sent us off the road down the bank."

"It's a terrible life," said Ida gravely, thinking, we must confess, less of Ben's than of Archie's exposure to peril. "Was the other as bad as that?"

"Oh, the other was nothing. Ben, who, I think, is the kindest-hearted man that ever lived," said Archie enthusiastically, "had just got home after a hard day's work when the wife of a goods driver came to say that her husband, whose train was due out in five minutes, was helplessly drunk. What was she to do? The man would certainly lose his place, and her six children would be left without bread. Where was his mate? Oh, his mate was worse than himself; they'd been working a Scarborough excursion up to three o'clock that morning, and had got heavily tipped and spent it in drink. 'Tha'lt bear a hand here, Master Archie?' said Ben to me, and very proud I was to be his stoker. Within five minutes we were steaming out of the goods-yard, and all went well till we came to Crossleigh Junction, where we were stopped by fog-signals, for there was a dense fog. In about ten minutes our guard came lounging up for a chat, and then we found that he'd been drinking also, though he could stand it better than the other two."

"'Thee'st put daan fog-signals, Billy?' asked Ben.

"'Nay, there were signals eneu. There was Bankside distant and Lower Crossleigh home——' A wild whistle cut him short.

"'Jump!' shouted Ben, but, as he spoke, the express crashed through the brake and fourteen or fifteen waggons."

"Were many people killed?" gasped Ida.

"No one was seriously hurt, or seemed to make much of it either. When Ben had waddled back to the wreckage, he said with a grin to the driver of the express who had run half through us, 'There's a matter of twenty waggons to get through yet, George; two on 'em powder, aw reckon. If thee'st still i' t' mind to be first, thee'lt find it gainer to back aat and wark raand by Saltsea,' that is, forty miles round. Those are my two accidents," concluded Archie, "and they'd hardly count in the trade."

Then Archie tried to get Ida to talk of such of her affairs as might be discussed before others, yet with an ominous fascination she would return again and again to railway life and its accidents.

"I wish you would give it up," she said earnestly, at last.

"Oh, I don't go often now. Besides, the engine, after all, is about the safest place. You are the first to see the danger. Then, if you choose to chance it and stick to her, the weight of the engine saves you half the shock; while, if you like, you can leap off. Boxed up here in a carriage you can see and do nothing."

"Do you get no warning of danger in a carriage?"

"You may hear three sharp whistles, but before——"

They sounded as he spoke, and he had time only to fling his arm round Ida and fix his feet firmly against the opposite seat when the crash came, and both were flung together sharply forward and back again as sharply.

"You're not hurt?"

"No," said Ida, a little confused by the shock.

"Thank Heaven! I'm afraid it's a bad business," as heartrending shrieks were heard from the front.

"Mrs. Tuck!" exclaimed Ida, when she came to realise what had happened.

"It mayn't be her train," he said, though knowing well it must be. "But if it is, she's well in front, and as safe as we are. I may be of some use, Ida; I must get out."

"I might do something?" appealingly, for the cries of fear and pain wrung her heart.

"You'd better not come, Ida. You'll be so upset and unnerved. I don't know that you will, though," he said impulsively, gathering this new idea of her from the expression of her face, on which he was gazing. "No; you'll be better for doing something, if there's anything to be done." So saying he helped her out on to the line, and they hurried together to the front. It was a bad business. No one in their train was seriously injured, except the driver and stoker who had leaped off. The driver was killed—impaled on a points lever which moved a switch serving to connect the up and down lines; and the stoker was badly injured internally. With these exceptions no one in their train was hurt seriously; but five of the passengers in the rear of the first train were killed outright, and many more

were mortally injured, or maimed for life. Mrs. Tuck and Dick, however, escaped the collision altogether in this way :

The accident happened at the foot of a long and rather steep incline about thirty miles from Woolstenholme. Here the driver of the first special was brought to a stand, by finding the load too heavy for his engine with the rails in the greasy state in which they were that night. After consultation with the guard, he decided to divide the train, and take it up in two detachments as far as the little wayside station of Denton, where there was a loop-line. Just, however, as he had got the first half of the train into the loop, and was uncoupling his engine to run back for the second, the collision occurred. The two signalmen, with whom the blame was afterwards found to rest, had taken the first part of the train for the whole—neither of them having looked out for the tail-lights. When, then, the relief special came up, and whistled for the red light to be pulled off, the signalman, having just got "line clear" from the next box, showed a white light, and the second train telescoped the latter half of the first. But Mrs. Tuck and Dick were safe at Denton in the first half.

This Archie soon ascertained, and reassured Ida as to their safety. Then, finding guard and signalman too bewildered to do more than block both lines, he at once took the command into his own hands. He telegraphed to Woolstenholme for doctors, etc., and got the reply, after the interval it took to waken the station-master, that there was no engine in steam to take them on. Now, as both lines were fouled with the debris of the accident, the engine of the first special was cut off from them. After a moment's thought, Archie questioned the signalman as to the cross-over connections between the up and down lines, and found that the points lever, which had impaled the poor driver, worked a switch that would get the engine of the second special on to the down line, and that four miles farther back were another cross-over road and a points lever, which would work it back to the up-line, and so get it round to the rear of the train. Running down the steps of the box he examined the engine, and found it battered, but so far as he could see, not materially injured. Thence he hurried to the guard, who was making a fire out of the fragments of the carriages, and got his help first to keep passengers out of the way, while he backed the train clear of the

points—then to uncouple the engine, and turn it on to the down line. This done, he bid the guard (who, like the signalman, took him for the chief engineer of some railway company, if not of their own) have the dead and wounded lifted gently into the relief special, which he would get to the rear of in a quarter of an hour, and drive back to Woolstenholme if he could get a stoker. But here was a hitch. All were too unnerved by the accident to volunteer for a service which would take them on the wrong line. It was no use for Archie to explain that the telegraph would keep it clear.

"Oh, Archie, could I do it?" asked Ida in an imploring tone. If it is necessary to explain her request and its passionate tone, we may say that at the moment she had turned away from a scene which haunted her for long enough after. A poor fellow, with both his legs crushed to the thighs, under a mass of wreckage, held up in his arms above his head his little girl—safe. When Ida took her from his arms he asked anxiously :

"Shoo's noan so ill hurt, is shoo?"

"She's not hurt at all, I think—are you, dear? No, she's not the least hurt; but you——"

"Eh, aw thowt shoo war lamed," he said with a happy look of relief in his face.

"No, no; she's not hurt at all, not at all," sobbed Ida; "but you——"

"Nay, it's ovver wi' me. Aw'm mashed up, aw am, an' reet." At this point the child's aunt, who had got separated from them in the crush at Woolstenholme, and who being higher up in the train, escaped with a shaking, came up, took the child from Ida, and while she covered it with kisses, moaned piteously over its father.

"Eh, Jem, Jem—eh, my paur lad!"

"Tha mun tak' her aat o' seet, Maggie. Shoo's that tender, tha knaws, that shoo'll be flayed wi' studyin' on it."* And so the poor fellow—who hadn't, and knew he hadn't, many more minutes to live—robbed himself of a last kiss from his child, in the fear that the scene might haunt her ever after.

Such sights, making Ida feel intensely a sense of helplessness and a longing to help, account for her entreaty to Archie :

"Oh, Archie, could I do it?"

"You!" then, after a moment: "Yes, you could. You can do the little I want."

* "Flayed wi' studyin' on it"—i.e. frightened with thinking of it.

Without another word he took her hand, led her across the line, and helped her up the steep narrow steps of the engine. Then standing opposite to her for a moment on the foot-plate, and holding both her hands in his, while she could see in the glare of the engine-fire all his worship of her shining in his eyes, he said, "Ida, it is like you." Ida thought there was nothing she would not have done for such praise from him.

Archie then took the shovel, and initiated her into the mysteries of firing. He showed her how to handle the shovel, and explained that all she had to do was to fling the coal as far in as she could—as far towards the side as she could—and (since she could not put much in at a time) as often as she could. He would himself be able to relieve her now and then. As they ran tender first, Archie could watch the stately figure bent unwearied at its drudgery, till his heart overflowed with a strange mixture of pity and worship.

It did not take many minutes for them to reach the next block cabin, where was the other cross-over road by which he could get the engine back on to the up line.

Here Archie helped Ida down, and showed her how to hold the switch-lever till the engine had well passed her. It was a nervous business, as anyone who tries it for the first time will find, and Ida was all but unnerved as she stood alone holding the lever while the engine thundered past within a foot of her. It seemed for the moment as if it must run over her.

They were back to their train before it was ready for them, and Archie, leaving Ida on the engine, hurried to the signal-box to give again directly instructions he had already sent the signalman by the guard—namely, to telegraph to Woolstenholme to have all things ready to receive the dead and wounded, and to have every intervening train shunted till the ambulance-train had passed. These messages the signalman had sent ten minutes since, and had had acknowledged, and Archie was relieved to hear that the only three trains—all goods—between him and Woolstenholme on the up-line were already in the sidings of the stations at which they had been stopped by the news of the fouling of both lines. Being thus absolutely secure of a clear line he could help Ida with the firing and reach Woolstenholme in less than forty minutes, if the water held out—his only anxiety. For

the rest, having a good engine, a light train of five carriages and a van, and a clear road with but few and easy gradients, he was happy in thinking that at the cost, perhaps, of a slight increase in the shaking he could bring the sufferers within reach of all that could be done for them in the shortest possible time.

He hurried from the signal-cabin, to help the guard and such of the passengers as were unhurt to lift the dead and the injured into the carriages. But, this sad work having just been done, he rejoined Ida on the engine and drew very gently out, gradually sharpening the pace up to a mile a minute. A mile a minute on an engine seems double the pace of what it does in a first-class carriage. The rocking, jerking, bounding motion of the engine and the hurricane rush of the wind and roar of the train make the pace seem terrific.

It seemed so to Ida at those times when, Archie having taken the shovel from her hands, she stood alone on the look-out.

It was a strange and weird experience to her to thunder at that frightful rate along an unknown road and through so pitchy a darkness, that, if she had been walking in it, she must have groped her way. And then the heart-shaking sounds which followed each other swift and sudden as the notes on some stupendous organ, with the deep pedal boom of the train as a constant undertone—the savage roar of the tunnel softening suddenly in the open, followed then in quick succession by a crash over a bridge, a rattle through a cutting, and the thunder through a station that seemed to reel out of their path.

Sometimes the great engine seemed to her excited imagination alive and flying for life, panting and in torment, the steam, with the red glow of the furnace reflected from it, like a lolling tongue of flame; while then these sounds were as the roar of its pursuers, who rushed at it and tried to close it in, but it tore madly through them all with the fierce strength of despair.

"We shall do now," said Archie cheerfully, with a boyish exultation in the tremendous pace. "There's water enough in the boiler alone to take her in, and you needn't put on another ounce—— Ida! Oh, my God!"

In a moment the steam was off, the brake on, the whistle opened, and the engine reversed, while Archie cried hoarsely to the girl transfixed before him:

"Hold fast!"

If she had not been with him he would have taken the slight and sole chance of life that seemed to remain—a leap from the engine. For there, as he rounded a curve, he saw but a few seconds off, the forelights of an engine that must, therefore, be facing them on the same metals. Most probably it also was in full steam, and then it would have been engine to engine, and speed to speed, but even if it were at a stand, there was not the least chance of pulling up in time to prevent a tremendous collision.

In such an intense moment thought is intense as a flash of lightning which, at night, shows vividly a whole country buried but a moment before in darkness. So, forgotten scenes and sins of Ida's past life sprang out of the darkness of distance with startling distinctness. But while she, with closed eyes, thought only of these and of God, Archie could think only of her. His eyes, too, were shut against the horror of his death, for they were fastened in remorse on the still white face turned from death towards him, her cheek pressed tight upon both hands as they clutched the side of the tender. Willingly he would have died for her, yet her death—this frightful death—was at his door.

Another moment and he had leaped forward, caught her in his arms, and kissed her twice in the delirium of relief.

"Safe!" he shouted as she opened her eyes on this happy celebration of a happy escape.

They had shot past the lights. They were the lamps of a goods train, of such length that it took up the whole loop-line into which it had been shunted, and that its engine, whose lights the driver had not removed, faced them within a foot or two of their metals.

"Oh, Archie!" was all Ida could say as she grasped his hands in both of hers.

He helped her to a seat, where she sat silent for a moment, holding still his hand, but having only God in all her thoughts.

"It's been a horrible shock to you. How I wish I hadn't taken you."

"I do not wish it, Archie."

As for those foolish kisses—they were foolish, that's all—no great cause of shame to Archie, or of offence to Ida. Perhaps, if the truth were known, they seemed to Archie to be cheap at the cost of all that agony, and they seemed to Ida to double the sweetness of her escape from death.

CHRONICLES OF ENGLISH COUNTIES.

SHROPSHIRE. PART I.

If we enter Shropshire by old Watling Street; which is here a still-frequented highway, pursuing a track marked out by men's footsteps from a time that is lost in the mists of dim antiquity; we shall not have travelled far before we come in sight of the great hearthstone or altar of all the county round, the solitary and wild looking Wrekin. A bold and rocky primeval mountain, rising from the fertile plains to a height of thirteen hundred feet—the abode of storms and clouds, when the land beneath, perhaps, rejoices in calm and sunshine—the Wrekin has ever strongly appealed to the imagination of all the dwellers in the land around. To this day there is a sort of tribal solidarity about the men of Shropshire, and their favourite toast when they meet in foreign lands is to "All friends round the Wrekin." The Welshman from his mountain-tops catches sight of its bold outline rising above the shining distant plains, and may recall the days when men of his race pastured their flocks over those rich plains, and held their fort or their city of refuge on the summit of that solitary height. And yet our Welshman will be doubtful whether his ancestors gave that mount its name. For Wrekin is not distinctly Welsh, and that it is not Saxon we may decide from the fact that the name appears wrapped up in the Roman *Uriconium*, which seems to say, town by the Wrekin, or something equivalent.

From Wrekin's lofty brow, furrowed by the mounds and trenches of tribes which have vanished from the land, a noble prospect is to be seen of all the country round. To the south are the fires and furnaces of the iron and coal regions; and looking westwards, beyond the towers of Shrewsbury, rise the blue hills of Wales, the massive bulwarks of the *Berwyns*. Nay, by a strong and eagle-like eye even, perhaps the peak of old Snowdon may be seen crowning the distant ranges. But not of mountains or of rugged moors is the Wrekin most eloquent, but rather of the great fertile plains over which it presides, and which here stretch almost without a break from west to east, and from north to south. At your feet the broad and placid Severn flows down to Bristol and the western ocean, and at the foot of those distant hills the Dee winds its way towards Chester, while in the same expanse of

varied fertile plain the feeders of the Trent make their way, willow-shaded, towards the northern sea.

Here one would say is the site for some bountiful mother city of the plains, a place where the great highways should meet and divide, and where peasants should bring the produce of their fields from far and near; while from its walls one should hear the busy hum of men, the ringing of anvils, the merry clink of masons' trowels, the cries of market-people, and the pleasant hubbub of human existence. Even a little exercise of imagination will bring this all back to us, for there below us, at the point where the pleasant river Tern joins the more famous Severn, once lay the great city of Uriconium.

A considerable city would Uriconium now be deemed, even in these days of congested population, with its walls some four miles in compass—an extent equal to that of mediæval London—enclosing handsome buildings and wide streets:

High towers, fair temples, goodly theatres,
Strong walls, rich porches, princely palaces,
Large streets, brave houses, sacred sepulchres.

All is silent now and lonely; the eye may trace here and there a fragment of masonry laid bare by recent excavations. There on the site of the buried city stands the village of Wroxeter and its church, itself ancient with sepulchres of long-forgotten knights and worthies who lived and died centuries ago, and whose bones lie about the foundations of a city, of the very existence of which in their lives they were ignorant. How the great city fell recent writers have attempted to show. "With its storm by the West Saxons," writes Mr. Green, "the very existence of the city came to an end. Its ruins show that the place was plundered and burned, while the bones which lie scattered among them tell their tale of the flight and massacre of its inhabitants, of women and children hewn down in the streets, and of wretched fugitives stifled in the hypocausts whither they had fled with their little hoards for shelter. A British poet, in verses still left to us, sings piteously the death-song of Uriconium, the white town in the valley, the town of white stones gleaming among the green woodlands."

Whether the elegy of the British poet, Lwyarch Hen, whom the Welsh claim as one of their kings, refers to Uriconium as "the white town between Tren and Trodwyd" is a matter of fierce dispute

among rival antiquaries. But anyhow the wail over the ruined town seems wonderfully appropriate to the scene:

Its people, are they not gone?

And truly Uriconium seems to have been the very last of the Roman cities to survive in its ancient importance. The old geographers show it as the chief town of the Cornabii, whom the Welsh describe as an intruding tribe from the country of Pwyl, or the Low Countries, who settled here before the Roman invasion—a people like the Swiss, it may be imagined, good handicraftsmen, and yet good soldiers, skilled in the management of their barren upland farms, and yet crowding into the cities as artificers and traders. Now, from its position, Uriconium was evidently a commercial and manufacturing centre; it was not a great military station, and its walls, in their full compass, were evidently built to protect the city itself and the inhabitants within its circuit, and not as a military post. Terrible must have been the suffering involved in the destruction of this great city, but it is hardly possible that its inhabitants were completely annihilated. Even in the savage wars of Assyrians, Medes, and Persians, the artificers and skilled workmen seem to have been spared in the destruction of a city, and we may suppose that the fugitives from Uriconium spread themselves over the country round, and we may perhaps trace in the skilled workmen of Birmingham, of Wolverhampton, and of the adjacent towns, descendants of the lost tribes of Uriconium; the Coranians of the Welsh triads. One curious bit of evidence of the existence of this people and its origin is to be found in the name of two small rivers of the district—the Mees and the Mose recalling the Maas and the Meuse of the Rhine district.

For hundreds of years after its destruction the remains of Uriconium rose sadly over the plain as a monument of destruction and decay, and we catch a glimpse of the appearance they presented in a legend which has probably a foundation of fact. William the Conqueror, it is said, on a visit to the Welsh borders, saw a very large town all burnt and ruined within the remains of its high walls, the appearance of which aroused strong curiosity. A Welsh peasant being interrogated, told a long story, such as Hotspur would have described as skimble-skamble stuff, about the destruction of the city by some enchantment, in which the giant Geomagog took a part. Here was an

adventure ready for William's Norman chivalry. Accordingly, one Payn Peveril armed himself—perhaps it is our friend Peveril of the Peak, a natural son of the Conqueror—and with fifteen other knights took up his lodging in the highest palace, as a tacit challenge to the powers of darkness. At night a terrible storm came on, and the Norman knights, scattered here and there by the lightning, lay for dead about the place. Then the giant appeared, or rather the foul fiend in his person, but Peveril was ready for him, and a terrific combat ensued, like that between Christian and Apollyon in *Pilgrim's Progress*. But in the end, with the aid of the sign of the cross, Peveril triumphed, and the fiend was overcome. With a sword at his throat the prostrate giant was made to own himself vanquished, and then the Christian knight sank a little from his moral altitude by trying to extort the secret of the buried treasure.

But this last is a secret which it seems the good knight failed to obtain, nor has anyone as yet been successful in finding the clue to the buried wealth of Uriconium. With the advent of the Normans, however, and the beginning of an era of solid building in wrought stone, the ruins of Uriconium, like those of many other Roman towns, began to be of value as a quarry of ready-made building materials. A little way down the Severn rose the Abbey of Buildwas, whose ruins are still impressive with their background of the lonely Wrekin. Haughmond Abbey also was probably built from the ruins of Uriconium, and the abbey, the friaries, and the numerous churches of Shrewsbury no doubt were constructed of the same materials. Uriconium was carried off piecemeal, and levelled even with the ground. But that ground, luckily for posterity, was not the original level of the city streets, for in the five or six centuries that had elapsed since its destruction, soil had accumulated about the buildings to a depth of seven or eight feet. Nothing was visible of the old city a quarter of a century ago, except a mass of masonry twenty feet high, and some seventy-two feet long, that stood by the village smithy, and was known to the incurious villagers as the old wall. Tradition indeed had preserved some memory of the city, and treasure-seekers at various times drove pits into the ruins, and excavated here and there, as directed by the divining-rod, according to signs extorted by the incantations of the cunning wizard of

the district. A buried well was said to exist, containing unheard-of treasures.

Near the brook of Ball,
There is a well,
Which is richer than any man can tell.

The copper coins which appear to have been sown broadcast over the site were known to the peasantry as *dinders*, in which some see a reminiscence of the Roman *denarius*.

In 1859 regular excavations were begun, commencing with the old wall, which proved to be in the centre of the buried city, and probably the containing wall of the central basilica, or hall of justice, that stood fronting the market-place. The buildings dug out proved of a very solid and substantial structure, the walls of the houses were three feet thick, the streets wide and well paved. Pottery was found in plenty; a good deal of the well-known red Samian ware, with specimens of a kind evidently made in the neighbourhood, and probably of the fine white Broseley clay which is still celebrated for the making of tobacco-pipes. Oyster-shells, too, were found in large numbers, showing that the popularity of the delicious mollusk is of no recent origin. The medicine stamps of a physician, the moulds in which coins were made, painters' palettes, a surgeon's lancet, the workshop of a metal-worker and enameller, these are a few of the interesting finds of which the moveable objects have enriched the museum of the town of Shrewsbury. But only a small part of the city has been as yet excavated. As odd fifty-pound notes have come in from rich and enthusiastic archaeologists, a corresponding amount of digging and excavating has been done, but our British Troy, with all the romance, and poetry, and mystery of its existence but half understood, must wait patiently for the day of its complete revelation.

After the destruction of Uriconium, a neighbouring height above the river, almost enclosed by a loop, or as the Scotch would call it, a link of the Severn, seems to have become a centre of population. The Welsh called the place *Pengwern*, meaning the headland rising from the alder swamp, and sometimes *Amwithig*, or *Allpleasant*—awfully pleasant as we should call it now. And here, if we may put faith in *Lwyarch Hen*, was the hall of *Kyndylan*, the chieftain who was slain in defending Uriconium from its assailants.

Kyndylan's hall is forlorn to-night,
On the top of Carree Hytwyth,
Without lord, without company, without feast.

And this is the site of the Shrewsbury of the present day, a pleasant, picturesque site on a wooded height, rising gradually from the bend of the river to the castle mound, which defends the neck of the isthmus. All about the watery meadows were scattered alders and willows, from which the Saxons gave the place the name of Scrob, or Shrubsbury, while an alternative name, derived from the willows that bordered the streams, would be Saulsbury, or Sallowbury, whence no doubt Salop, or Salopia, as another name of the county.

The fighting-men who killed Kyndylan, probably took possession of his hall—little better than a mud hut in itself, but once vocal with feasting, with stories, with songs, and the strains of the harp beyond anything that it is given us to enjoy in these dull days. But the town was not of much account in Saxon times, although we may get a dim vision of a visit from Harold on his way to put the Welsh in order. There is a doubtful tradition, indeed, that the great cairns on the ridge of the Steperstones, towards the Welsh border, were thrown up in honour of Harold's victories over the Welsh. But under the stern Norman rule the town soon became of importance from the castle which Roger de Montgomery built upon the site of the British fort. A strong, arrogant, cruel race were these Montgomeries, who soon came to a bad end in the person of Robert de Belesme, whose rebellion against Henry the First, the lion of justice, with his defence of Shrewsbury Castle against the king, has recently been dwelt upon by Mr. Freeman. Once more, ere long, Shrewsbury Castle stood out against a king, in the wars between the Empress Maud and the popular hero, King Stephen, and again was forced to surrender to the royal power. Were there any peaceful inhabitants of the little burgh, they must have been sorely perplexed and harassed by the incessant turmoil about them. If king and barons were quiet, then the Welsh would be stirring, and in 1215 we find Llewellyn, Prince of Wales, strong enough to defeat all the power of the Lords Marchers, and to lay siege to Shrewsbury itself, which was speedily surrendered to him. The Welsh prince, however, did not remain long in possession, and with the coming of stern Edward the First, the scourge alike of Welsh and Scotch, matters assumed quite a different aspect. Edward was determined to make an end of the Welsh difficulty, and encamped at Shrewsbury

bodily with bag and baggage. Court, exchequer, parliament, all the machinery of government, were hurried off to the Welsh borders to await the issue of Edward's war; a fine haul, indeed, for the Welsh could they have broken through the iron net that Edward was drawing around them. But the ruthless king was too strong for the mountaineers; and the long struggle between Teuton and Celt, which may be said to have lasted for more than eight centuries, was apparently brought to an end by the death of Llewellyn, the last of the native princes who could rightly style himself Prince of Wales.

The Parliament at Shrewsbury in King Edward's time is noticeable as being the first in which citizens of London are recorded as having served as members. Six notable citizens made the long and perilous journey to Shrewsbury to meet the king. The lower house was lodged in a barn attached to the monastery of SS. Peter and Paul, while the barons were quartered in the castle.

It was the lot of these citizens of London to be among the judges of Prince David, the brother of Llewellyn, whom the Parliament condemned to the cruel, barbarous execution of being dragged to death in the streets of Shrewsbury at the tail of a spirited horse. It was with a grim kind of satisfaction, no doubt, that the London citizens carried back among their baggage the ghastly head of the murdered prince to be placed over London Bridge. The king had done a cruel deed upon a brave adversary, but he had highly pleased the commercial interest by an act of vigour, and no doubt found his account in it, when next he had to go into the city for money.

However, the stern cruelty of the king had its effect in making the Welsh marches a safer place of residence, and the next appearance of an English monarch at Shrewsbury was of Edward the Second in all his bravery, with his brilliant court and favourites, and an assemblage of barons and knights, for whose entertainment a splendid tournament was arranged; sports which ended tragically enough in the death of Roger Mortimer, Earl of March, the ancestor of the line of Yorkist kings.

In the reign of Richard the Second, the town was again the seat of a Parliament, adjourned to Shrewsbury from Westminster; a Parliament which was held in the chapter-house of the abbey with great splendour. Among the attendants of the young and light-hearted king was a Welsh

squire, an adopted son, as it were, of the English court, where he had received his education and his training in all knightly exercises. This was Owen Glendwr, and afterwards we find the young Welshman one of the faithful few among the faithless, who served his master to the last, and was taken prisoner with him in Flint Castle.

Upon the death of Richard, Owen retired to his own estate in Wales, to that pleasant Glyndyfrdwy from which he took his name—a sunny, solitary nook looking out upon the lovely Dee, as the river flows on its way to Llangollen. In little favour at court, Owen soon found the hand of an English noble stretched out to snatch away his small estate; and so, with all the spirit of a knight-errant, he furbished up his arms and his pedigree, and with a gathering of wild Welsh hillmen, set himself in arms against the mighty monarchy of England. King Henry himself took the field against this seemingly insignificant opponent, and quartered himself once more at Shrewsbury. But Henry was no great warrior, and his expeditions against Owen all ended in failure and disaster.

The keen intelligence of the Percys had noted the king's weakness, the feeble hold he had upon the people, and the elements of disorder in the realm, and presently began the great rebellion of Hotspur, the story of which is so well told by Shakespeare. The commencement of the revolt found the king almost unprepared, while the Percys had already a large following under arms and were marching southwards. But Henry, rising to the desperate nature of the situation, dashed forward almost alone, leaving his sons, Prince Harry and Prince John—him of Gaunt—with the Earl of Westmoreland, to put the counties under array and join him with their force at Bridgnorth. Henry was fortunate enough to overtake and detain at Burton-on-Trent a body of men who had been raised for the warfare on the Scots' border, and hearing that his enemy had reached Stafford, and had turned aside to join his forces with Owen Glendwr, the king threw himself upon Shrewsbury with the energy of desperation.

This rapid march upon Shrewsbury in effect saved Henry his crown. For Owen had succeeded in mustering a good force of fighting Welshmen at Oswestry, to join the Percys, but hearing that the king had already occupied Shrewsbury, he began to doubt the issue, and so suspended his

march. And then all over the south and west of England the king's name had proved its power, and a strong force of stout yeomen and men-at-arms was marching northward with the princes.

Both sides were soon ready for action, and on the 22nd July, 1403, the king, as soon as dawn lighted up the sky, marched out his forces into the open fields to the north of the town. Already Hotspur was in the saddle with Douglas, his late enemy and present ally, and uncle Worcester, whose age and experience might balance the impetuosity of the daring young warriors.

We are told that the peas were then ripe, and their haulms turning yellow, but they grew so thickly and abundantly on the fields that Hotspur took advantage of their cover to harass the king's advance with his best archers. But the cumbrous hosts were presently drawn out in a long line extending from Berwick westward to Haughmond Abbey in the east. Hotspur had slept at Berwick that night, such sleep as he had taken in the short summer's night, and had been strangely cast down when he learnt the name of the place. For some wizard had prophesied that he should not live long after he had seen Berwick, and he had avoided the familiar northern town ever since; but now fate was awaiting him on this unknown ground. "Yet will I not be cheaply won," muttered Hotspur.

And so in the bright summer morning, the sunlight stealing across between the hostile lines, suddenly the trumpets sounded with portentous blare; while at the signal a great shout arose from thousands of throats: "St. George, St. George!" cried the king's men, while the Northumbrians replied as stoutly, "Esperance! Percy!" And then the cries were stilled for a moment as from either side a tremendous shower of arrows hurtled through the air, casting a dim shadow over the hosts. Then many a steel coat was riven; and many a stout fellow bit the dust as the opposing lines struggled together, and, with a noise like the beating of a thousand anvils, sword, and spear, and axe tested every joint and rivet of casque and cuirass. And thus for hours and hours the fight wavered to and fro, with various success, but tending on the whole to Hotspur's advantage.

The lion-hearted Hotspur saw the critical moment of the day, and calling to him Douglas and the bravest of his knights, they all made a desperate drive at the

king's standard. The standard was reached, Douglas clove the skull of the king's standard-bearer; the king was carried away in the rush. All seemed lost for him, and the star of the Percys triumphant; already horsemen had ridden off to bear the glad tidings to the north, when an arrow from some unknown hand pierced the heart of Hotspur, and he fell at the moment of victory.

The death of Hotspur paralysed every arm on the Northumbrian side. What was there to fight for now that the great chief had fallen? Confusion followed, and dismay, and the rebels—we may so call them now—began to fly. Douglas rode off at full speed for the north, but was overtaken and made prisoner, and soon after uncle Worcester was captured. The knights and gentlemen of Cheshire who had taken arms from a feeling of personal loyalty to Richard, and personal dislike to his supplanter, were cut off in their flight, and almost annihilated. But the loss of the northern forces was chiefly sustained in the flight. Up to the moment of defeat the king's army had suffered far more severely; all its chief leaders had been slain. Thus all the churches round about were long rich with the sculptured effigies of those who had fallen beneath the trenchant blades of the Percys and the Douglasses.

Henry returned thanks for his victory on the battle-field, and decreed the erection of a collegiate church in honour of his victory. This church, or part of it, still exists as the parish church of Albrighton, and on its site, tradition says, the monarch pitched his tent on the night after the battle.

All this time Glendwr's army had remained encamped at Oswestry; but Owen himself, it is said, watched the fight from the convenient shelter of a lofty oak. And when Glendwr saw the result of the day, he rode silently back, and his forces dissolved like a mist.

In after days, when the wars of the Roses began, Shrewsbury definitely assumed the badge of the White Rose. After the fatal battle of Wakefield, when the Duke of York was captured and beheaded, his son Edward made for Shrewsbury, where he raised men enough among the hardy borderers to fight and win, soon after, the battle of Mortimer's Cross. During the later scenes of the war, Edward's queen resided there permanently for safety, and in the convent of the Black Friars were born two of her children, one destined to

die in infancy, while the other, Richard, came to a tragic mysterious end, for it seems still doubtful whether he was murdered with his brother in the Tower, or survived, to die, as Perkin Warbeck, by the hands of the executioner.

With the accession of Richard the Third, Shrewsbury again figures in the national annals. When the Duke of Buckingham deserted Richard's party, he took refuge in Wales, and raised an army there with which he had planned to seize upon Gloucester, and begin a campaign in the west. But a violent storm of rain raised a flood in the Severn, which cut the duke off from Gloucester, and at the same time dissolved his army. The duke took refuge in Shropshire, where he had estates, and concealed himself in the house of his steward Banister. The steward, however, betrayed his master to the King's sheriff, who took the duke forthwith to Shrewsbury, where he awaited the King's pleasure—so forcibly conveyed by the Shakespearean adapter:

“Off with his head: so much for Buckingham.”

DEAN WHARTON'S DAUGHTER.

A STORY IN SEVEN CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER I. AN OLD TUNE.

To commence with an assertion. It is an undoubted fact that cathedral towns, like the fat boy in *Pickwick*, can seldom or never be said to be fairly awake. Furthermore, should some rare event or shock galvanise by chance their centres into some faint presentment of life or wakefulness, their relapse is, as with that immortal youth, sure, sudden, and complete.

If you chance to know Postleton at all, you know how very far that solemn city is from being any exception to the rule. It is indeed at the moment I take up its peaceful records illustrating it to the full. An event has occurred, the shock has been given, and the city is even now hastening—if anything so slow can be said to hasten—into a respectable and dignified relapse.

Besides its cathedral, a grandly solemn structure of which the city is justly proud, Postleton boasts, just cresting the hill, and some quarter of a mile beyond its prim but pretty outskirts, a goodly block of grey stone buildings, known to all men as the barracks. Here a regiment of cavalry finds its quarters, to the advantage, no doubt (though over this heads are shaken), social and otherwise of the neighbourhood.

The event from which the city is at present recovering, or rather relapsing, is no less a one than a change of regiments, with all the bustle and excitement indispensable to that proceeding. The old regiment but yesterday played itself dashing out to the appropriate strains of *The Girl I Left Behind Me*; to-day the new one—doubtless to equally appropriate strains—has played itself as dashing in.

Farewell sighs and wistful glances have followed the one; and—such is life!—bright faces and welcoming smiles have greeted the other; and thus with a possible ultra-faithful heart (feminine) here and there, things are, so to speak, squared in Postleton, and affairs once more roll placidly on.

CHAPTER II. A NAME.

IT was the evening of the day on which Postleton had welcomed the new comers. Rain was falling, streets were emptied, silence and respectability, wet through, and in a forlorn state of dampness and limpness, had the place to themselves. Gas flared wastefully in shops where for the last hour never a customer had entered; where shutters were at last being put up over windows into which nobody looked. Eight o'clock had struck from tower and steeple. A church-bell was going ding-dong; from the barracks on the hill, where the stranger red-coats had settled down, the familiar tattoo came faintly sounding. In the cathedral-yard the grey minster towers loomed in misty silence. In the long, soft evenings of summer the Close was a tempting spot enough to those for whom rest and silence did not necessarily mean dulness and despair. Through all the long procession of years on which the old grey pile had looked so calmly down, how many a one had loved the quiet spot, how many a hot and restless heart had sought rest and peace within its shadows—quiet nooks and corners where glare of sun and turmoil of the world never seemed to penetrate, and where only the chirp of birds and the cool rustle of the trees came, mingled, it might be, with the tones of the great organ to break the stillness! There was stillness enough to-night, no sound even of passing footsteps in the place, only the dreary drip, drip, of the fast-falling rain. Through the mist, here and there, stray lights blinked from the old red-gabled, ivy-covered houses where the cathedral dignitaries found shelter. At the corner, the one spot of real brightness, the deanery looked cheerily out through its

red-curtained windows, for Mr. Dean was entertaining a party, principally composed of clergymen and old fogies, at dinner. The Dean was a tall, thin man, with white, scanty locks and a great droop in his shoulders, gained, it was said, by much stooping over his beloved cello.

The Very Rev. Arthur Wharton, D.D., had been a widower for more than ten years past, and was known for many a mile beyond the Precincts for his kindly heart, strange, shy ways, and his devotion to his children and his violoncello. It was his daughter Agatha, his first-born and veritable right hand, who, such a mere child when the poor mother died, had ever since, with strangely old-fashioned ways just at first, done the housekeeping and “looked after papa.” And she it was—alas, that possible faithful heart!—who had looked with wistful eyes (though, truth to tell, it was but in thought she had trusted herself to follow them) after the departing heroes of the day before. Poor Agatha! It was but an old story, but her experience of the world was not very great, or she might have taken comfort to herself in the knowledge that men love and ride away every day, and if women's hearts are broken now and then, women's hearts should not be won so easily. “Had her love been so easily—too easily won?” Agatha had asked herself the question, how many times already! She could not say, she could not tell. Just now she only knew that she had let her heart go from her, and she could not call it back. It had been won from her by what falseness, what treachery! and now it was cast back to her, and she could not take it up. How the red flamed into her cheeks as she remembered it all! How she railed against herself for the past! What impossible vows she made for the future! Poor Agatha! Her experience of life, as I have said, was not very great, and as she sat, sick and ashamed, hiding her aching heart as best she might in the deanery schoolroom this evening, she kept asking herself if anyone before her had ever been so foolish, so unhappy. In the cosy, old-fashioned room quiet was supposed to reign, and lessons for the morrow to be in progress. But it was a supposition merely. The other occupants of the room were but three, but one of them alone contrived to make noise enough for double the number. In vain Agatha cried:

“Hush! they will hear you in the dining-room.”

"And a good thing too—wake 'em up, sleepy old Rip Van Winkles," shouted the culprit, Jack, aged fourteen, and a grammar-school boy.

"Oh, Arthur, do make him be quiet," implored Agatha.

"Quiet, you sir!" cried Arthur, thus appealed to, looking up from his study of the new Army List.

"Oh, I say," cried the irrepressible Jack, as his eyes fell on the little pink cover "let's see who these new fellows are. I saw you, Miss Frank, hiding over in old Townsend's shop this morning, when they came in, and yesterday too, for the matter of that, when the others went out."

"I was with Miss Thorne," Frank began.

"Oh yes, I know—all right; but where was Agatha? Too proud to go, I suppose?"

Frances, otherwise Frank, Jack's twin and boon companion, shook her frizzy head.

"Agatha does not care about military men—not as a rule; do you, Agatha? I do, though Mrs. Tyerman does not think they are satisfactory acquaintances."

The boys laughed outright, and even Agatha smiled.

"Most of the others were nice enough," said Arthur. "I don't see why some of these shouldn't be."

"Oh, I dare say they are all very nice," said Frank pleasantly, making a place for herself on Jack's chair, "if only Agatha had not made up her mind not to know anything about them. Now, then, Arthur, Two Hundred and Tenth Red Royals."

"Frank's in love with the whole lot, I do believe," cried Jack. "I didn't think much of 'em myself."

"How disappointed they'd be if they knew!" said Frank.

"Well, I shall hear their names first, and fall in love with them afterwards. People with ugly names are always so stupid. Go on, Arthur."

"I can't very well go on until you let me begin."

"Well, begin then."

"Two Hundred and Tenth Red Royals—Lieut.-Col. Patrick Joseph Porter, V.C."

"And a nice little party he is," interrupted Jack. "They haven't got his weight, have they? Not room for it, perhaps?"

"Now, Jack, do be quiet; never mind him, Arthur."

"Majors Walter R. Leslie, James Browne."

Frank gave a movement of disapproval.

"Oh, James Browne won't do."

"Why not, Miss Clever?" cried Jack. "Now, I dare say he's the best fellow of the lot."

"Oh, there are plenty of good Brownes about," said Arthur. "But what's in a name?"

"Ever so much, I think," chattered Frank. "Look at old Canon Crump; no wonder he has never got anyone to take him, poor dear! Fancy being Mrs. Crump! Yours sincerely, Frances Crump;" and pretty Frances Wharton laughed, the others perforce joining in, till the echo of their young voices must have almost reached the poor old Canon himself, smiling in happy innocence over the Dean's old port downstairs.

"As for fine names, if that is what you want," said Jack scornfully, "just look at that Dr. Lacey fellow—a nice snob he was; gave himself airs enough for the whole regiment, and was less than nobody, after all."

"By the way," put in Arthur, "I never thought much of your favourite, Danby, Agatha."

"My favourite, Arthur!" protested poor Agatha faintly.

"Well, he was always at your elbow when he got the chance; not that he got it here so very often, though I have wondered at the governor having him even as much as he did."

"Asked himself, I expect," growled Jack parenthetically.

"It was because he was musical, I think, papa sometimes asked him," said Agatha, with a desperate feeling that if ever "the boys" only came to suspecting her secret, she must run away and hide herself for ever.

"He musical!" shouted Jack; "the humbug! why, he couldn't so much as turn over your music for you, Agatha, without someone to poke him up at the bottom of the page."

"Well, he will have to turn over someone else's music now," put in Frank cheerfully.

"I think it is bed-time," Agatha said presently; there was a little tremor in her voice, which no one noticed.

"Oh, but Arthur has not read half the names; just another quarter of an hour," Frank pleaded.

"It is long past your time, Frank," said Agatha. "I am going too, for my head is aching."

And so, Frank protesting no more, good-nights were said. But there was no sleep

for Agatha that night—there had been but little for many a night past.

The great bell in the cathedral tower close by boomed out stroke by stroke the heavy hours. From near and far the numerous church clocks one by one took up the tale, and clanged or chimed them forth; still the weary head tossed on its pillow, and the hot tears fell like scorching rain. Happiness, forgetfulness, even, it seemed to Agatha, could be hers never again. But youth and pride are stronger than she knew; forgetfulness nearer than she thought; and love—well, it is Agatha Wharton's love-story that I am about to tell.

CHAPTER III. THE DEAN'S JAMES.

FOUR o'clock had sounded from the cathedral; the bell had ceased to call for service. Mrs. Thorne, Frances Wharton's daily governess, had passed from the deanery and disappeared with the other dozen or so of worshippers in the old Norman doorway opposite. Upstairs in the deanery schoolroom sat Frank, herself hard at work on a harmony lesson, for little Mr. Philp, the cathedral organist and Postleton music-master. She had not sat there long when the schoolroom door was thrown open with a bang, and Jack's boyish voice proclaimed the intruder. Jack's face was very excited.

"Frank!" he cried; "Frank, just leave off and listen to me."

"I can hear you, Jack—I really can, so can the old jackdaws in the tower there, I should say, if they haven't cotton-wool in their ears."

"Caw!" cried Jack, close to poor Frank's pretty pink ones, and away went Frank's book to the other end of the room. "Now, who is the old moustache the governor has got in the library? 'No admittance except on business,' you know; but there the interesting stranger sits with his hands in his trousers-pockets, calm as a cherub on a tombstone. Agatha's there too; as for the dear old Dean, he actually looks as if he wasn't wishing the fellow the other side of Jordan."

"If you have quite done, perhaps you will kindly bring me back my book," said Frank quietly.

"Now, Frank, don't be aggravating. Do you or don't you know who the party is?"

"Of course I do! The 'party,' as you call him, you very vulgar little boy, is James Browne—my Browne."

"Your Browne?"

"Oh. Jack. what a stupid you are!

Major James Browne, Red Royals, of course."

"Don't see how that makes him yours," said Jack.

"I should hope not, indeed!" retorted Frank. "Didn't I say at the very first I couldn't put up with any such name? James Browne! I can just see J. B., short, stout, hair a cheerful red, face, ditto."

Jack could stand no more, he broke into a derisive shout.

"If you could only see him! Short and stout is he? and red? Oh, Frank, you duffer!"

"Thank you!" interrupted Frank with much dignity.

"Don't mention it," returned Jack politely. "All I can say is, if that is your major he's taller than the governor, and just as thin; as for his hair it's all but black; moustaches likewise; to conclude, his face is a pleasing bronze, and he's got eyes like gimlets. He knew all about the book I wasn't looking for, bless you! Oh, Frank, you are a muff!"

"Never mind," said Frank, "there are Brownes just like that, I know. I wish Agatha would come up and tell us all about it. But don't talk any more, please; I have my lessons to do."

"So have I," said Jack, "worse luck," and was silent for two minutes.

Downstairs in the library James Browne still sat. Five came booming from the cathedral. The quarter sounded, then the half-hour, and at the same moment the library bell rang.

"At last," cried Jack and Frank together. Jack was out of the schoolroom, with all but his heels over the banisters, by the time Ruffles the butler had got to the library door. Jack went back to Frank too astounded for speech.

"Well?" cried Frank. "Well?"

"He's going to stop!"

"What! Who?"

"James Browne." Then Frank and Jack sat and looked at one another.

The Dean of Postleton, whatever he might be to outsiders, was no enigma to his children. No father was better loved or more loving, but his odd, shy ways, his misery and discomfort in the presence of strangers, were fully known to them. His old friends—and he had many—were welcome enough, but to the making of new ones he was not given—certainly not in this sudden and altogether unlooked-for manner. And here was this mysterious major, who had barely been in Postleton a week, and who had

never crossed his threshold until an hour ago, made free of the house at once! However, there was nothing to be done but to sit and wait with what amount of patience they might until Agatha should be available. This was not until the first gong sounded, when the library door was heard to open, and Agatha's soft footsteps came up the stairs. At the schoolroom door Jack and Frances pounced out upon her.

"What does it mean?" they cried, and dragged her into the room.

Agatha looked at them with an amused smile. A faint rose bloomed on her cheek, her soft brown eyes were shining. Frank's sharp ones noticed it all.

"Why, Agatha, your headache is gone. Is it the wonderful major who has done that—has he bewitched you and papa both?"

"I think it is you who are bewitched," laughed Agatha. "As for Major Browne, he is nothing more wonderful than the son of papa's very oldest friend—the Browne we have heard him so often talk about."

"Oh, that is it!" said Jack; "then I hope he is one of the right sort, for I suppose we shall see plenty of him."

"But, Agatha, you didn't care about knowing any of them, don't you remember?" and Frank looked up at her sister in honest perplexity.

"But this is different. Papa seems as if he had known him all his life, indeed he has seen him before, though it is years ago. Besides, he is not a young man, or—anything of that sort," Agatha added a little vaguely. "It will be only as if we had suddenly found a new relation. Papa is calling him James already."

"Uncle James! Yes, that will do very nicely," said Frank. "He can take us skating and all that sort of thing when Arthur is gone to that horrid Woolwich."

"You just tell him so, Miss Frank. If he doesn't think you a cool young person, I'm a Dutchman."

"He will think me a most charming niece. Come, Agatha, let us go and put on our best frocks for 'our uncle.'"

It was the good Dean's fancy to have his four children round him at his late dinner. Without some such arrangement he would have seen little or nothing of the two younger. It would have been worse than useless quoting "custom" to the Dean in such a case, so when the Major, descending from the Dean's dressing-room, entered the drawing-room, he found his host and children already there.

Frank looked up and saw a tall, soldierly, dark-faced, dark-moustached man, "quite middle-aged," as she afterwards declared to Jack, "and every inch an uncle." The major saw the Dean, his kindly face looking more kindly still, as he stood before the fire—for, though August still, the day had been cold and cheerless—one hand in Agatha's, the other laid on Jack's young shoulder. And the Dean's eldest daughter, he saw her now, as it were, for the first time. In the dim light of the low-ceilinged, dusky library he could scarcely have been said to see her at all. But he saw her now, tall, fair, white-robed, lamp and firelight full upon her, a little queenly looking, a little stately; dark, smooth, rippling hair, a broad, smooth brow, a calm, rather sad, sweet face. The glow from the fire lent a flush to the soft, creamy complexion, and lighted up the soft, dark eyes that were raised to greet his entrance. James Browne was not quite the sober, middle-aged individual the Dean's children deemed him. At five-and-thirty a man has scarcely outlived all the fire and passion of youth, and, even as this man looked, his heart was stirred, his pulses throbbed. The old-fashioned, fire-lit room, the Dean, the little group surrounding him, faded. Time had rolled back; once more goddesses walked the earth—one was smiling on him now. But it was only for a moment. To whatever wild flights the outwardly calm Major's fancy might have wandered, he was speedily recalled by his host's voice.

"Come," the Dean was saying, "come to the fire and let me introduce the rest of my youngsters. This is Arthur, an embryo brother in arms, and this is Jack. I really don't know what we shall do with Jack. Never make a Dean of him, I fear—eh, Jack?"

"Make a lawyer of him, papa. He can talk, can Jack," said Frank, with a friendly nod to their visitor.

"Poor Frank!" said the Dean. "Look at her, James; doesn't she look like a young lady who can never get in a word edgeways?"

"My name is Frances, if papa would only remember," said the Dean's youngest daughter.

"And I am to try to remember too—eh, Miss Frances?"

"Of course; why, you could not call me Frank, you know. You are neither papa nor Jack."

"Certainly not."

"Imagine you calling Agatha Aggy."

James Browne gave a genuine shudder.

"I can imagine nothing so horrible."

"We used, you know, years ago; but she didn't like it, so we gave it up. I don't think she looks a bit like an Aggy, do you?" Frank went on confidentially, glancing over at Agatha, who with the Dean had gone over to a side table, and was at that moment turning over some music that lay upon it.

"Heaven forbid!"

At the exclamation Agatha turned.

"What is it?" she asked, coming forward.

"Oh," cried Frank, "I was only telling Major Browne that he had better not call you Aggy, because you didn't like it."

"Oh, Frank," cried Agatha, with a little flush and laugh.

"I don't think there was much fear," the Major said—he was laughing too. "How could they do it?"

At this moment, happily, the door was opened, and Ruffles announced that dinner was served. As James Browne felt the Dean's daughter's hand within his arm, as he looked down upon the face so near his own, he told himself if he only might come to call her Agatha he should be quite contented.

TRAVELS IN THE EAST.

PART II.

A CARAVAN is not uncommon in the East, and when a traveller falls in with one, he generally visits it. I should have as little dreamed of finding a cream ice in the desert as a caravan in Stepney; but somehow I fell in with one, and found it well worth visiting. As it was hidden in a sort of oasis as it were, a traveller might easily have passed, and not caught sight of it. But the sharp eyes of my guide were not to be deceived, and a single glance enabled him to indicate its whereabouts.

The oasis wherein the caravan had halted was not far from the spot I have described in my last paper.* Although by way of euphemy I call it an oasis, it bore no trace of verdure or refreshing vegetation; and in fact it differed little in its dark and dismal ugliness from the dull and dreary district that surrounded it. Perhaps it might appear that I was using a misnomer if I were to speak of this same region as a

desert, for in the space of three miles square there live above a million people. I simply speak of an oasis, because I am describing my late travels in the East, and I may as well endeavour to impart some Oriental flavour to my narrative. In the directory, however, my oasis is more prosily put down as "King's Arms Yard," abutting upon Carr Street. After quitting Regent's Place, it seemed a fit advancement to be brought to King's Arms Yard, and as far as the name went, one could hardly think it strange to find a caravan in Carr Street. This thoroughfare, however, like certain lordly folk, is honoured with a second title; which, although distinguishing, has not yet been inserted in the postal directory. The dwellers in the neighbourhood have styled it "Donkey Row," possibly because of the preponderance of costermongers, who mostly keep their carriages, among its influential residents.

After a glance at this last paragraph, the intelligent reader will have readily surmised that the caravan I saw was a yellow, old, roofed vehicle, which had probably belonged to a showman or a gipsy. Doubtless it had journeyed many a mile in shady lanes, and over sunny heaths, and breezy open commons; and had halted in the shelter of many a leafy wood, ere it came to its last resting-place in this great wilderness of brick. But its wanderings were over now. Its rural haunts and hiding-places would see its yellow face no more. Its wheels had been removed—and sold by the last occupant—it had come down in the world, and had sunk helpless on the ground, and having ceased to be a vehicle, was now hired as a house, at a shilling a week rental, by a reputable tenant.

This house, or caravanserai as Orientalists might call it, not being very capacious, could only hold one room, and this room, though not very large, yet served as cellar, kitchen, scullery, dining-room, and drawing-room, workshop, library, and bedroom for a couple of old people. Opposite the doorway, which was half closed by a hatch, there was a bed at the far end, which filled the space from side to side—if the word "far" may be used to denote so small a distance. Between the doorway and the bed—in the dining-room, that is—there were a work-table, or rather a work-bench, and a chair, and in the corner to the left there stood a little iron stove, with a smoke-pipe through the roof, which barely served to let the smoke out. A small old man stood by the table tying up in little

* ALL THE YEAR ROUND, New Series, Vol. 33, p. 349, "Travels in the East."

bundles the firewood he had cut. The house being such a tiny one, its contents were small to match, and the bundles were so little that they seemed to be intended for especially small fires. It might easily be guessed, too, that the little old man was making them for a woefully small price.

Above the bed, that is about three feet from the floor, there was a narrow little shelf, which held a little crockery and some few little odds and ends, which seemed somehow to impart the notion to my mind that a petticoat was somewhat familiar to the place. Among them was a little bottle, holding a little water and a little sprig of fir; which, being carefully preserved, had possibly been gathered from a last year's Christmas-tree. Beside it stood a little flower-pot with a couple of green hyacinths, green, but giving show of coming richly-coloured bloom. These latter were the gift of some Good lady Samaritan who had visited the little house, and thought a little floral decoration would improve it as a dwelling. "She gives me a little treat like," remarked the old man gratefully; "an' it makes a man feel cheerful to see a bit o' green about him while he's working."

It seemed well that there was something pleasant in the place, for the look outside was certainly not cheering. The yard lay inches deep in dirt, so that the notice appeared needless that there was no thoroughfare. All around him looked indeed in a slovenly condition, albeit the old man declared he got on "pretty tidily." He would confess, however, that his dwelling was a trifle draughty in cold weather. Draughty certainly it must have been, not to say even tempestuous, when the stormy winds did blow; and not very warm either when Jack Frost was at the door, and there was only half an inch or so of deal to stop his entrance. The caravan required caulking as badly as an old boat. There were great cracks between the boards, which seemed to make the walls transparent, and certainly the inmates could not truthfully complain of any want of ventilation.

Half sheltered by a shed, just in front of his own doorway, a couple of sons of the old man were, like him, busy cutting firewood. With a gusty drizzle falling, and the ground so deep in slush, the yard appeared a dampish place for such an occupation. When questioned as to income, the old man showed no reticence. He frankly stated that he made four hundred or so bundles in a week, and sold them,

being small, at eighteenpence the hundred. But he had to go about with a barrow for the sale of them, and the hiring of that vehicle reduced the weekly profits. Still, he and his old lady somehow managed to live on, and they were both of the same age, which might seem a little singular, and, being matched in years, they might last it out together. Seventy-six they were, and that was the real truth, as surely and as certainly as that his name was Jonas. And he was born in Willow Gardens, nigh to Curtain Road. Ah, 'twere a'most in the country then. Well, yes, now you came to think of it, the name did sound a pretty one, and seemed a little rural like. Yes, they got on fairish well, except of a hard winter. But times were fairish bad, too, seeing as they really hadn't bought a pound of butchers'-meat this two years. "Indeed," added the old man, "I do believe we'd a'most forgotten how it tasted like, till we got that Christmas-dinner as you gave us, Mr. Austin."

The old wood-cutter put forth his right hand as he said this, and gave my guide a hearty grip of gratitude, which showed how well the Christmas-meal still lingered in his memory. While taking leave of him I saw that there was pasted by the doorway a legal-looking document, which proved to be a notice of distress for rent. It was dated the 3rd of August in last year, and was addressed in clerkly hand to Mr. William Glibbery—not a bad name for a runaway who does not stop to pay his rent. This gentleman was informed that, as the sum of three pounds sterling was then due on his account to his landlord therein named, certain chattels had been seized, as specified thereunder, and which in the inventory were briefly thus described: "Four old Chairs, Mixed bed, and Shaving-glass."

What may be a "mixed" bed, the reader must be left to guess. I have no suggestion to help him in the matter, save that when a clown puts on his nightcap in a pantomime, the bed is pretty sure to get "a little mixed." And indeed the notion of the Law, in all its solemn majesty, being set to work to sell up all the goods of Mr. Glibbery, might well appear suggestive of a first-rate comic scene.

A thought of something humorous is worth having in the East, where the traveller will find his spirits easily depressed. So the tableau of the Sheriff entering to slow music (to indicate the tardy progress of the Law), and seizing the

four old chairs, and the mixed bed and the shaving-glass, formed a pleasant subject for a mental picture, to occupy our fancy as we went upon our way. The next halt that we came to was made in certain (so-called) Gardens, which had nothing horticultural about them, save their name. No hyacinths grew here, nor any sprig of green, and the only thing approaching to a fir-tree was a clothes'-prop. The gardens formed a no-thoroughfare, with a blank wall at the end, and beyond was a canal, and on all sides the horizon, which was not very distant, was monotonous with chimney-pots. Here we had a smiling welcome from a comely little woman, whose cheerful voice and manner formed a pleasant contrast to the dreariness around her. As we entered, she was busy giving dinner to her baby, who appeared to relish highly the plentiful maternal nourishment. Three cleanly little girls were clustered by the fire, with a cat by way of plaything somewhere in their midst. Two larger girls were absent—at school, their mother said, and she likewise owned a boy, who, like his father, was at work. There were some ugly china "ornaments" paraded on the chimney-piece, and, in the way of higher art, there was displayed a coloured photograph of General Garibaldi, to be recognised quite readily by his prominent red shirt. On the shelves to right and left of him there was a goodly show of crockery, which she said she had bought cheap, for it was given with the tea; and, to complete the household luxuries, there were a leash of clocks. These, however, were "all cripples," said the cheery little woman; but her husband had a weakness for seeing clocks about him, though they weren't of any use.

Four shillings a week was the rent paid for their house—for this room of ten square feet, say, and for the bedroom over it. This latter we were shown by the little dame in person, still carrying her baby, who was still at his repast. The stairs were steep but clean, and the chamber, though not large, looked quite palatial in appointment, as compared with all the other sleeping-places we had seen. There was actually a carpet in it, not a very large one, it is true, but still a carpet; and there was another clock, and this was really going; and there was a little table—let us say a toilette-table, for a clothes-brush lay upon it; and there was a bed with sheets and counterpane—yes, real sheets and counterpane; and by the window, curtained off,

was a small bed for the son, and a bed, a trifle bigger, was there for the five little daughters by the door.

Everything seemed clean and neat, above stairs and below. The house looked poor, no doubt, but still there was some comfort in it. "Ah," exclaimed the little mistress as baby ended his repast, "ah, it weren't always like this, now was it, Mr. Austin? Difference? Why yes, it's made a difference in all ways, both to him and me too. There, he'll work from morn to midnight now he will, and never grumble not one bit he won't. And he gives me all he gets too, an' I can feed the children well now, an' keep 'em clothed, an' tidy like. And I never could do that, you know, an' we was mostly all'ys glumpy afore he took the pledge."

I found, by further questioning the cheery little woman, that her husband was a sort of clever Jack-of-all-trades, who "did up houses" here and there and anywhere, she said, and was able by so doing, working late and early, to earn a pound or so a week. He seemed well-nigh a Croesus, when compared with all the wretchedly-paid workers I had heard of, and had seen too, in the East. But perhaps his calling needed more than common brain-work; more, for instance, than a costermonger's, which chiefly needs good lungs.

By way of a sad contrast to this cheerful little soul and her children, who, with baby, might have warbled, "We are Seven," we found a family next door who were terribly afflicted by the badness of the times, which has long been an epidemic ailment in the East. The mother we had met just as we left the caravan. She was trying to earn a sixpence by the selling of her "creeses," and was tying them in farthing bundles as she briskly trudged along. "Hard at work? Well, yes, sir," as we exchanged a greeting. "One had need to work hard nowadays, if one don't want to starve." She seemed a bustling, active, clean-cheeked, civil-speaking body, who tried to make the best of things, and had seen better days. Her shoes were in holes, and she was very poorly clad, and there was a worn and anxious look upon her face. That this was not without a cause became pretty clear to me, when I had seen her home and the children she was toiling for, out there in the wet street.

Their father was at work too; making

fish-baskets he was, and when in luck's way he could do a tidy trade. Make a couple of gross a day he could, and more too if he stuck to it and didn't stop a minute 'cept for swallowing of his meals. Profit? Well, he reckoned he could make four bob a day a'most, but then you had to go and sell 'em fust, and that was mostly a day's work. But the worst of it was as you couldn't get the stuff, now the sugar-trade were slack, leastways down there in the East.

The obvious connection between fish-baskets and sugar not being apparent to my uncommercial mind, it was explained that the baskets were made of the rush wrappers wherein the raw sugar was sent to be refined. Since this business had been sorely crippled by the foreign bounties, the basket-maker suffered no less than the sugar-baker from the want of work. My voluble informant had but one eye, and he kept this keenly fixed on me while he imparted his instruction; as a schoolman sharply notices the dulness of a dunce. Having done his best to enlighten my crass ignorance, he left his basket-making (which was done al fresco, in a drizzle and a draught), and showed the way indoors. A wretched room it was, this sitting-room or kitchen—call it which one pleased, the name would scarce be fit. For there was not a scrap of fire, nor any sign of cookery past, present, or to come; and, for purposes of sitting, there were but two old chairs, one with a broken leg. Floor and ceiling were in holes, and the plaster in great patches had crumbled from the walls. A pale-cheeked little boy, with the thinnest threadbare clothing to cover his thin limbs, was nursing a sick child, wrapped up in an old petticoat; while another boy, still smaller and still more thinly clad, was—playing, shall I say?—with a remarkably lean cat. A bit or two of crockery lay huddled in a corner, and the only ornament displayed was an old discarded horse-shoe, which, the man said, with grim irony, was hanging there “for luck.”

Upstairs we found two beds, one with a patched coverlet and but little underneath it; and the other with some scanty bits of sackcloth to cover its defects. In these two beds the parents and their half-dozen children (five boys and a girl) contrived somehow to sleep. Possibly, for warmth's sake, close quarters were endurable; for the walls seemed hardly weather-tight, and on the ceiling also the bare laths were

revealed. “Well, yes, it do drip through a bit,” the man was free to own, after telling us that he paid four shillings weekly for his rent, and that the landlord had promised to look to the repairs. “Look to 'em! Well, yes, you see, he do look in a' times and give us a look round. But if we so much as p'int to 'em, he 'ooks it pretty quick.”

One of the window-panes was broken, and mended with a bit of newspaper, which, however, hardly served to keep the wind out. I remarked that as the room was little more than ten feet square, and there were nightly eight to sleep in it, perhaps it was as well to have a little ventilation. Plenty of fresh air was a famous thing for health, and there was nothing so unwholesome as a close and stuffy bedchamber.

“Well, sir,” observed the man with rather a grim smile, “I don't think as you'd much complain o' feeling stuffy if you was to sleep here a bit. We ain't in want of air, scarce, with a door as hardly shuts and a windy as half closes. Nor yet we ain't much short o' water neither, leastways when it rains we ain't, with a roof as is half rotten and about as full o' holes as an old collander. An' were a jolly good frost to come, we wouldn't be over warm neither. Ah, you may well say it's a blessing that we're having a mild winter. If it had been a hard one, God knows what would ha' become of us. It's a precious bad time that we're a having as it is, but if we've a month's frost you'd better put me in my coffin. I ain't a lazybones, I ain't, nor yet a lie-a-bed, I ain't neither, now am I, Mr. Austin? You've knowed me for some years now, and you ain't catched me a skylarkin', no, nor yet a lushin' neither, not but what I likes a drop o' beer when I've been workin' 'ard and I've a few spare coppers 'andy. But it's precious few they are just now, and tidy hard to get, and a pint o' beer's as scarce here as a pinch o' baccy.”

I asked him how he earned his livelihood when he could not get the stuff for fish-baskets; whether, for instance, he had ever been working at the docks, and whether there was much of a scramble for admittance, for I had heard of a man being sadly hurt while in the crowd there. “Shouldn't wonder, sir,” he answered. “You see it's this way, just at present. There's a hunderd of 'em waiting, and there's forty or so wanted. An' the weak 'uns gets the wall, and the strong 'uns gets

the work. Seen 'em? Yes; I've seen 'em and I've been among 'em too, scores an' scores o' times, I have. It's a reg'lar knock me down for labour is the docks. And what with all the waitin', I declare, sir, it don't pay. It's heart-breakin', it is, to stan' there 'most all day, an' never get a job, and then come home without a copper, and find the children all a cryin' and a sobbin' for their supper, and most like they an' their mother too ain't 'ad not a mouthful nor a mossel, not since yest'day. Work? Look here, sir, I ain't afraid o' work, nor I ain't no ways proud neither. In the way of a day's work, I'd put my hand a'most to anythin'; Mr. Austin 'll tell you that, sir. Yes, an' there's thousands such as me, too, down here in the East, there is. An' what I says, as it's hard lines on a man as have a family to keep, an' is willin' enough to work for 'em, and then to go from week's end unto week's end, an' not get none."

Here my guide mildly interposed a hint that State-helped Emigration perhaps might prove a remedy, by ridding the East End of its surplusage of labour. "But look here, Mr. Austin, it's like this way," said the basket-maker. "The more there goes away, the more there comes to fill the gaps. See here now, sir. Last month about five hundred was shipped off to Horsetrailer. Well, thinks I, a good riddance. There'll be fewer mouths to fill, and fewer hands to work here now. But last week there come about a thousand from abroad, an' they all landed at the docks, an' here they seem to stick, and it's mostly Polish Jews they are."

The few last words he added with something of a snort, as though the creed and foreign country had made the grievance worse, and the presence of these immigrants in Stepney still more odious. Perhaps his temper might have led him to speak harshly of the strangers, whose arrival he lamented, had not my guide enquired if he were coming to the Hall next Sunday morning. "Well," replied the basket-maker, with as straightforward a look as his one eye would allow him, "I'd be willin' enough to come an' hear a bit o' gospel. It alls seem to do me good, and make me feel the better, though perhaps I mayn't quite rightly understand it. Though you seem to put it plain, too; I'm not denyin' that, sir. But you see, sir, I ain't proud, still I ain't one to be sneered at. Now, just see this old coat o' mine. It's the on'y one I got, and there ain't much of a go-to-meetin' sort of cut about it. I

don't think as you'd fancy being seen in it o' Sundays, an' 'specially by daylight."

There was a twinkle in his eye as he said this, which seemed the outward sign of much inward hilarity. "But, sir," continued he, "my missus, she'll be there. She alls somehow manages to rig herself up tidy, though she ain't one to spend a farden upon finery. But she's alls neat, she is, leastways on a Sunday. An' she'll come in the morning, sir, 'cause one of us must stay at home to mind the little 'uns. And—well, yes—perhaps you'll see me in the evening, 'cause after dark, you know, an old coat ain't much noticed."

Ah, my friend, thought I, as I shook him by the hand, on bidding him farewell, many a well-off man makes many a worse excuse for not going to morning service, than the want which you allege of a decent coat to go in.

Leaving, then, the basket-maker to look after his children, while seeing also to his work, as well as his one eye could perform the double labour, we emerged from the Gardens which had been so wrongly named, and continued to explore the wilderness of brickwork wherewith we were encompassed. But we had hardly proceeded fifty paces on our way, when suddenly my guide exclaimed—

Alas! my sheet is full, and I can only beg the reader, who would hear this sudden outcry, to wait for my next paper.

GEORGIE: AN ARTIST'S LOVE

A STORY IN SIX CHAPTERS. CHAPTER III.

MRS. THOMPSON was very happy during the first days of their new acquaintanceship. Hers was that happiness peculiar to mothers when they think they have met a man able and willing to provide for the material requirements of their daughters. The son-in-law later becomes rather a despicable object than otherwise; but that is afterwards, when he is perhaps working hard to make both ends meet; the requirements of the wife generally increasing in exact proportion as any charms she may have once possessed diminish.

Never during her twenty-two years of life had Myra snubbed a man so little. At times she was almost gracious, and a graciousness so rare was indeed flattering, if Mr. Rentoul would only arrive at appreciating it. Poor Mrs. Thompson felt she would like very much to point it out to him.

But the artist was not altogether satisfactory. Mrs. Wright had spoken of

him as being dreamy-like; and charming as the anxious mother found him, and courteous and intellectual, there was certainly something provokingly vague and irresponsible about him.

Myra said that he had the mind of a poet; her mother did not dissent, and found herself going over the names of poets who had been practical enough to take unto themselves wives.

But as the days sped by, and each day brought with it an additional hour or so of the artist's society, a dreadful fear began to lie coldly on Mrs. Thompson—a fear which was accompanied by something very like a feeling of remorse; for was it not her doing that Georgie was with them? Georgie, with her untidy, fluffy hair, and blue eyes, and silly, bewitching ways!

Alas! Mrs. Thompson was old enough to know how few men there are who can resist utter silliness in a pretty woman.

The three young people were constantly together, for Georgie had lately developed much taste for out-of-door sketching. No more devouring of three-volume novels on the old staircase. Why interest herself in imaginary love-scenes and admiration? It was more amusing to be a heroine oneself than to read about one. It was not at the sound of Lucinda's or of Violet's voice that a grave, somewhat absent man was instantly attentive; it was not on their lightest, most trivial words that a presumably clever man hung, as if each syllable were disclosing some most precious truth.

It was not Lucinda, nor yet Violet, who could bring a sudden tender light to a pair of brown eyes with a smile, or a "Thank you," or a "Please do."

Mrs. Thompson had indeed cause for anxiety, but she could do nothing—could only sit passive and look on at things shaping themselves just as perversely and crookedly as they well could.

It was not only that a possible son-in-law was becoming every day less possible. That would have been a misfortune certainly, but, after all, one to have been borne; she had had, indeed, already some experience in bearing it.

Poor gentle woman! she had long tried to accept the fact that Myra was above mere commonplace matrimony, with its prosaic adjuncts of weekly bills, washer-women, and other domestic evils. Still, ever and anon, the motherly instinct would become strong within her, and she would feel as if nothing less than a son-in-law could give her true happiness.

And lo! most unexpectedly, in an out-of-the-way corner of the world, was a being as if created for no other purpose. An artist with charmingly radical ideas, well-read, earnest, and not conceited. A man who listened with respectful attention to Myra's most advanced opinions, who argued with her on abstruse subjects far beyond the ken of ordinary women, who appreciated her sketches, and generally paid homage to her genius.

To lose all hope of closer relationship with such a man was distinctly an evil, but there was worse than this.

With a mother's keen eyes, Mrs. Thompson had noted a change in Myra, an unwonted softness which almost approached humility. She did not insist upon giving the artist her opinion on every possible occasion. She asked for his very often instead. When engaged in conversation with him, she had not the air of being at the top of a very high mountain, talking to someone scrambling about at the bottom.

What could be inferred from signs so pregnant with meaning as were these, but that Myra was in love?

Poor Mrs. Thompson! poor Myra! poorer blind Mr. Rentoul! hateful Georgie! Such had become the sentiments of this disappointed mother.

It was late in the evening; Myra and her mother were still sitting over the fire. Georgie had gone up to bed. A tray on which were some empty tumblers was standing on the table. Mr. Rentoul had been spending the evening with them as usual. He had not long gone; he had said "Good-night" about five minutes after Georgie, declaring she was tired, had left them.

Mrs. Thompson had watched him open the door for her, but had not caught the low words he had spoken, as he bent over her for a moment. They might only have been "Good-night," but Mrs. Thompson had fancied they were more interesting. Georgie had smiled and blushed, and even Georgie was scarcely silly enough to change colour for a simple "Good-night."

The mother and daughter were silent, but they were both thinking of the same person. Mrs. Thompson, being the weaker, gave first utterance to her thought.

"Mr. Rentoul did not stay so late as usual this evening," she said, feeling her way a little.

"Did he not?" said Myra. "I suppose he is as tired as we are. Besides, really, Georgie gave rather a strong hint, making such a fuss about going to bed."

"Yes," assented Mrs. Thompson; and then, with some suddenness, the result of her nervousness: "Do you know, Myra, I almost regret having met Mr. Rentoul. I find myself awkwardly placed; there is something so vague about him. I don't quite like to ask him his intentions; he may not have any. Yet I can't help feeling I am in some way responsible."

Myra flushed a deep hard red, and looked straight at her mother.

"His intentions! Mother, how can you? What do you mean? Do you want to drive me away? Cannot a man and woman be decently civil to one another without laying themselves open to such degrading remarks? Mother, promise that you will say nothing of the sort to him."

Her voice was softer as she finished, dwelling a little on the personal pronoun. She was leaning forward in her excitement, and the firelight shone in her dark eyes.

"But, my dear, remember I am responsible to Mrs. Rickards, or Mrs. Sparkes, as she is now, and Georgie is such a child."

"Georgie!" repeated Myra; and then, becoming conscious of what her amazement implied, she grew a deeper red.

There was an awkward pause, but Myra was soon herself again. Her only fear had been self-betrayal. Georgie's name had been no revelation to her. She looked upon her as a pretty but very silly child, so utterly beneath the serious attention of a man such as Mr. Rentoul that she felt she could afford to smile at the very absurdity of her mother's idea.

"Mother, please say nothing of this to Mr. Rentoul or to Georgie. I know she is fond of admiration, and inclined to flirt, but I am quite sure there is no cause for interference. Mr. Rentoul looks upon her as a complete child. Have you not remarked how he treats her—how familiar he is? Sometimes I really think he believes her to be younger than she is."

Myra was so convinced that her view of the matter was the right one, that Mrs. Thompson almost let herself be persuaded into a like belief. It is so easy to make ourselves believe that which is pleasant to us. She fell asleep that night full of agreeable thoughts and delightful vague plans for the future. As a natural consequence, she dreamt that Myra was married.

But Myra's thoughts were not of so agreeable a nature. She had been disturbed, more than she could account for herself, by what her mother had said. She had also no great confidence in her mother's discre-

tion. She felt she could not rest until she had seen Georgie, and at once put her foot on any possible misconception. It would be a thousand pities to let Georgie get any false notions into her head. So, after hearing her mother turn the key in her door, she softly entered Miss Rickards's room.

Georgie was in bed, but awake, and she sat up, blinking a little, as Myra advanced upon her, candle in hand.

"What is the matter?" she asked, and stared in some amazement, for the girls were not on those terms of intimacy which encourage bedroom confidences.

"You are very young," Myra began, a little hurriedly. "I have more experience than you have. You must not be angry at what I am going to say."

Miss Thompson disposed of her candle and leaned against the foot of the bed. Georgie as yet felt nothing but surprise.

"You are such a child," Myra continued, her eyes resting on the little figure in its white nightdress and loosely falling hair. "You have been so short a time in England, you scarcely know our ways, perhaps. Georgie, I think you allow Mr. Rentoul to be too familiar with you. You are eighteen, remember. I know he treats you quite as a child, but you are not one in years. I am speaking for your good," she said more gently, as Georgie put up two small hands to hide her burning cheeks. "You might be sorry afterwards when it would be too late. Do not forget that even the best sort of man will take liberties with a girl entirely wanting in self-respect."

"Myra, don't!" gasped Miss Rickards. "What have I done? Why are you so cross to me?"

"I am not cross," returned Mentor impatiently; "but I only know that if you continue to allow Mr. Rentoul, or any other man, almost to lift you over stiles, as he did yesterday, you will end by being kissed or otherwise insulted. Good-night! That is all I have to say."

Miss Rickards made no response; her face was buried in the pillows.

Myra left her, not altogether displeased with the result of her good counsels.

The weather was still bright and frosty the morning following Myra's impromptu lecture; but the young lecturer had a bad headache—perhaps a result of last night's eloquence. Be that as it might, she lay in a darkened room; her mother and eau-de-cologne remained within call. Georgie was free to do exactly as she liked.

As sketching expedition had been planned, but Miss Thompson had sent a small note in her legible, characteristic handwriting, asking Mr. Rentoul to defer it.

The artist had come himself to express his sorrow at Miss Thompson's indisposition. He had only seen the elder lady, and was generally supposed to have set out with the intention of sketching on his own account.

Georgie stayed in the whole morning. It should not be said she was desirous of meeting Mr. Rentoul; indeed she was not, or so, at any rate, she was pleased to tell herself. Myra had impressed her; besides, she had an idea that the artist might have said something derogatory of her, and, after all, she was not entirely wanting in self-respect.

But after luncheon the inducement of a bright sun, and the clear crispness of a frost in the country, were stronger than that valiant resolution of keeping within doors.

She took the road towards Charmouth. The last time she had come along it she had been with Mr. Rentoul and Myra; they had brought skates, and had disported themselves the best part of a day on some wretchedly bad ice that is sometimes to be found just on the Charmouth coast. It is a small creek, formed by the sea, which is occasionally kind enough to freeze into uneven and, some people say, unsafe ice. On the other hand, it is very shallow, and there is no danger beyond that of a wetting.

On the day Georgie was thinking about there had been no mishap; it had all been very delightful. Myra had struck out with her usual energy by herself, leaving to Georgie the monopoly of helplessness, that womanly adjunct which is so charming to superior man. And Georgie had been very helpless indeed. She had clung to the artist's strong arm as to dear life; she had uttered sundry little cries, like some sweet, frightened bird; her colour had deepened, her blue eyes distended at the wonderful danger of being pulled swiftly along, she doing no more than standing upright on her skates and trusting herself to her teacher. Ah, it had all been very delightful! But no doubt he had been amusing himself with her. Certain words and looks that still dwelt in her memory meant nothing, then! It was a point of view as unpleasant as it was new. She had thought, if any distinct thought on the subject could be said to have entered her small head, that the

amusement had all been on her own side; any earnestness or passion on his.

She passed through Charmouth and stood on the edge of the cliff, looking down at the sea. Golden Cop was at her left, a view of the bay and old Cobb far away to her right; every outline stood out boldly in the clear frosty atmosphere. She heard a step, a glad exclamation of surprise, and she turned and shook hands with Mr. Rentoul, who, with his little artist's knapsack on his back, was coming from the direction of Chiddcock. He was so glad to meet her that she found his cordiality contagious, and forgetting all her recent resolutions, was soon chattering away, and smiling and blushing just as usual.

They stood looking at the view for some time, and then Georgie announced that she was going down to the sea, and began descending the most precipitous part of the cliff.

"Take care!" he cried. "If you will come a little farther this way there are some steps."

But she went on, disregarding, wilful, and laughing. She thought it very nice to have the power to frighten him.

He looked on a moment in silence, and then he too began the descent, but he did not follow in Georgie's footsteps, and soon passed her. She saw him springing lightly and easily from rock to rock far beneath her.

Her progress was much more slow. However, she at length found herself on a sort of table of rock, some feet from the beach, where Mr. Rentoul was standing looking up at her. There was a provoking smile on his face.

Miss Rickards felt she could not, if she would in the smallest degree preserve her dignity, descend from her present position.

She turned and began to retrace her steps. In her haste, she stumbled and almost fell.

"Miss Rickards—Georgie, it is no use going back," he called out from below. "You will only come to dreadful grief of some sort."

This time Georgie was not wilful. It was not very amusing to tumble about slippery rocks by herself. She came to the edge of the shelf of rock, and prepared to spring into the pair of strong arms held out to receive her.

"One, two, three!" he cried. At three he was holding her in his arms, and he was apparently in no particular hurry to loosen his hold. Looking down at her, a swift

temptation assailed him, and, man-like, he gave in to it at once. He bent over her suddenly, and pressed his lips to the most accessible part of her cheek.

The next moment she was free, and was standing in front of him with burning face.

"How dare you!" she cried, Myra's words coming back to her with a rush.

"You said I might help you," he answered.

"It was rather a savage way," said the girl, the bright colour still deeper than usual on the soft skin, an angry glitter in the clear eyes.

But he only looked at her, and laughed a low, tender laugh of possession.

"My darling, you did not mind. Confess now you rather liked it." He went over to her as she stood leaning against the rock and tried to take her hands. She tore them away.

"No, I did not like it; I hated it!" she cried passionately; "and you are not a gentleman."

She paused and looked at him. Her words had rung out so distinctly in the frosty air, and it seemed to her about the most cutting thing she could say. What effect would they have? She had read queer stories of mad love turning at a moment's notice into hatred even more mad. They were in about the most solitary part of the pretty winding Devonshire coast, and there was the sea close at hand. Visions of a new version of Delaroche's Christian Martyr came into her mind. It was a pity she had so much fur about her. It might give her a draggled, drowned-cat sort of appearance. She looked at him full of these tragic thoughts, and remained staring in utter amazement at his proceedings.

He had fallen back two or three steps, and was gazing at her, his head slightly on one side, through half-shut eyes. There was not the slightest expression of resentment on his face.

"Don't move. There, that is perfect!" and he held up his walking-stick horizontally between them, shutting one eye entirely.

Enlightenment dawned upon her. She went out of position abruptly. Was it possible he had not heard those words, to her so awfully distinct, or was this only overacted indifference? How was she to convey to this dense and withal charming man her indignation and contempt.

"Why did you move, Georgie? You have no idea, against that background of dark rock, what a pretty picture you made.

Still, I think I have it fixed in my head, except perhaps the position of the right arm. Would you mind posing again just for a moment?"

She was speechless. Tears and laughter were both equally and dangerously near; either would have meant an ignominious defeat. Oh, for Myra's height, her dignity, her power of keeping people at a distance! Why did men—that man in particular—treat her as some child, to be spoiled, and petted, and insulted at will?

She turned quickly and began walking away. She had reached the narrow, slippery steps in the cliff before he overtook her.

"What is the matter, Georgie? You are not really angry? What, tears! What is the meaning of this?" he asked tenderly.

Were there tears? She had not known it. With a tan-coloured glove she brushed them hastily away, and then she stopped and faced him.

"The meaning, sir, is that you have insulted me, and that I wish never to speak to you again. What do you take me for? Is it because I am so"—she paused, and then remembering Myra's impressive remarks as to her youth, continued, "so young that you treat me as if I were a shop-girl?"

"I insulted you! I!" he repeated, bewildered, but in another instant, recollection coming to him, he smiled—yes, actually even then dared to smile.

"My dear," he said gently, "why are you so foolish as to talk about things you don't understand? I could never insult you, my little Georgie, my little wife who is to come and make my whole life glad. Georgie, my darling, don't you see that such a thing is impossible? Don't you know that I love you?" As he had spoken, his voice had deepened, and there was that in his face no woman—not the veriest novice—could mistake.

Georgie was trembling, and her heart was beating fast and strong. Ah, why was there no one by to tell her that life is not prodigal of its treasures—no one to warn her not to trifle with the happiness of a lifetime? She was but a child, and words were still to her little more than words. She was scarcely even conscious that she loved this man, who was looking at her so gravely.

Myra's warning was fresh in her memory: "The best sort of man will take liberties with a girl entirely wanting in self-respect." Myra was right—but let her,

poor, weak little Georgie, show, even at the eleventh hour, that those words of counsel have not been altogether thrown away. Let her prove to this man that she was not so utterly deficient in womanly pride as not to resent being played with.

She looked up at him. If it was play, it had surely but little merriment about it. But there is the thought of his recent conduct to harden her, and she said words neither of them could ever forget.

It was over. The girl was crimson with excitement, and perhaps want of breath; it would need but little to produce tears, and sobbing reconciliation.

The man was very white and stern-looking, and his words had the calming effect of cold water.

"It is only left for me to ask your pardon, Miss Rickards. I am very sorry to have caused you so much annoyance. It has all been a great mistake, but," here he paused for a moment, "I must ask you to believe that no insult was intended." Then, with a slight change of tone: "Had you not better be thinking of getting home? It will soon be dark."

"But you are coming?" faltered the girl. Her heroic mood had melted with most unheroic rapidity, and she was longing to make up.

"Yes, of course," he answered, not looking at her.

They then proceeded to mount the narrow, almost perpendicular steps, Indian-file, and in silence.

The steps were slippery with frozen snow. Georgie stumbled once or twice; if it had not been for the strong man close behind her she would have fallen.

When at length they stood on terra-firma, the long white road winding away into cold mist before them, the sun a distant red ball sinking into the west, Georgie, thinking of the long, cold walk home, and of how its discomfort would be aggravated if her companion remained so cross, held out a small hand, and murmured something weak about being friends.

Perhaps it was the thickening mist that prevented him from seeing, or was he looking another way? At any rate the hand retreated into the muff without having

touched his, and thoroughly chilled for its foolishness.

They walked some hundred yards well apart, when he suddenly stopped.

"Do you not hear the sound of wheels?" he asked, and without waiting for an answer he pulled out his watch, and informed her that it was just the time the Chiddcock coach was due. "You had better get in, if there is room," he continued. "You can't walk fast enough to keep yourself properly warm."

"And you?" very softly.

"Oh, I shall walk, make a short cut across the fields probably. If you get out at the top of the High Street you will only have that short piece of hill to walk alone up to Holy Mount. You do not mind?"

No, she did not mind. His desire to be rid of her was too evident, too humiliating for her to express any sort of wish as to the manner of her homeward journey.

And so the coach was stopped, and Georgie was handed, or rather pushed in, with the united efforts of Mr. Rentoul and the benumbed conductor, across the knees of half-a-dozen sturdy countrywomen, whose mingled breath gave an unpleasant damp feel to the atmosphere. After several false starts, and the noise of horses' sliding feet, the coach was off.

Georgie, after making an ineffectual attempt to brush a seeing place in the thickened panes with her muff, shrank away into her corner behind her furs. Oh, to be walking home, with even the width of the road between them, and the possibility of forgiveness!

Later in the evening Mrs. Thompson, with uplifted finger and hushed breath, met her, a tired, half-frozen, dejected little mortal, on the staircase.

"Don't make a noise, dear; Myra has just gone to bed, her head is still very bad. What makes you so late?"

"I don't know," murmured Georgie, on the point of crying, partly from fatigue and cold, partly from other causes. "I am very tired; I think I shall go to bed too."

And for all answer to Mrs. Thompson's look of surprise, she escaped upstairs to her room.

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

A DRAWN GAME.

BY BASIL.

AUTHOR OF "LOVE THE DEBT," ETC.

CHAPTER XXIII. "A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM."

FIVE minutes later Archie drew up at Woolstenholme, and found the medical men and appliances awaiting their arrival. While the patients were being carried from the carriages, he helped Ida off the engine and into the waiting-room, and then brought her there some wine which had been provided for the use of the injured.

Meantime, the guard informed the station-master and the traffic-manager—who, happening to be in Woolstenholme, hurried to the station on hearing of the collision—that the train had been driven by a gentleman, who seemed to be the head engineer of some railway company, and whose "lady," as the guard reverentially called the stately stoker, had undertaken to fire for him. The traffic-manager at once sought out Archie, to thank him, and to get his name and address for the thanks of the directors to be sent to him. He had heard such an account of Ida from the guard that he begged Archie's permission to thank "his lady" in person. Archie explained that the lady was not his wife, and begged that her name might not be brought into the affair at all. It would be but a poor acknowledgment of her services to have her name published in every newspaper in England. As this did not decrease the traffic-manager's anxiety to see a lady who was so much above "the last infirmity of noble minds," Archie was forced to gratify him by an introduction to Ida. Besides, he had an interest in conciliating a man upon whom it depended whether Ida could be got to Leeds that night.

But why should she go to Leeds? It is

more than time for us to explain Archie's cool abduction of Ida. Immediately after the collision, most of the uninjured passengers of both trains made their way along the railway to Denton, to be taken thence after some hours' delay. By one of these passengers Archie sent Mrs. Tuck a hasty note to say that Ida was safe, and that, as Denton was within seven miles by road from Leeds, he would take her in a conveyance to Mrs. Pybus for the night. This, in truth, was the best thing to be done under the circumstances, as Mrs. Tuck herself did not reach home till two o'clock in the morning, and as Ida, who could only have got on by a later train, would not have reached The Keep till five or six. In making this arrangement, however, Archie never reckoned on himself and Ida's returning to Woolstenholme, which—since the direct line was blocked—was over fifty miles from Leeds by rail. Therefore, he was interested in conciliating the traffic-manager. He hoped by this introduction to Ida to win from his gallantry what he might not have won from his gratitude—a special train. The result was unfortunate. The traffic-manager would not have made the least difficulty in granting them a special without the sight of Ida, and the only effect of his introduction to her was so immense a fuss made about her at the station, that all on the platform—doctors, reporters, "own correspondents"—were agape to gaze upon this personage. It was not to be wondered at, therefore, that in the next day's papers Ida figured, anonymously, but more largely than the other victims. "A young lady of extraordinary personal attractions," "A daughter of the gods, divinely tall and most divinely fair," "A Dea super machinam," "Una subduing the lion to beneficent service," etc., etc., were among the choice descriptions she

found of herself in the papers Archie brought to tease her with. But Ida was seriously disquieted by the fear that Mrs. Tuck—possibly Mr. Tuck also—would identify her as the heroine of this adventure, through Archie's name being given in full. Of course on her return she would have confessed her share in the business, but it would not seem so bad in Mrs. Tuck's eyes, if she had been able to explain to that kind-hearted woman the piteous state of things which drove her to volunteer for a service no one else would undertake.

Thus Archie's introduction of the traffic-manager to Ida was not the happy stroke he thought it. It got him a special minute or two sooner, but that was all. A driver and stoker were soon found who, after a short delay to coal and water the engine Archie had driven, took them on by it to Edgburn.

It was a happy journey on the whole, for there were long intervals during which Archie succeeded in beguiling Ida into forgetfulness, both of the scenes she had just passed through and of her impending marriage. Indeed, he himself forgot both altogether, and thought only of Ida and old days. Her presence had the intoxicating effect upon him of the touch of the wine-dipped laurel of the Muse in the Lyrical Monologue :

I pledge her silent at the board ;
Her gradual fingers steal
And touch upon the master chord
Of all I felt and feel—
Old wishes, ghosts of broken plans,
And phantom hopes assemble ;
And that child's heart within the man's
Begins to move and tremble.

Thro' many an hour of summer suns
By many pleasant ways,
Against its fountain upward runs
The current of my days ;
I kiss the lips I once have kissed. . . .

About this kiss of his boyhood his reminiscences fluttered, like a moth about a candle, longing to approach it, but fearing extinction in the act. For Ida by a look or a word might have withered him if he seemed by this path to be making his insidious way from past to present love-passages.

Ida's memory also lingered about this kiss, and the boyish passion it expressed—nothing to her at the time, everything now when it was "orbed into the perfect star she saw not when she moved therein" Of course, therefore, she kept the subject, whenever it was approached, at a discreet distance. Thus during their journey both their lines of thought, like asymptotes—to

use a simile more appropriate to the "Loves of the Triangles"—though always approaching yet never touched their focus.

The special not only took them to Leeds, but took them to Edgburn, the first station on the line from Leeds to Sedgethorpe—took them, indeed, almost to the very gate of the vicarage.

Archie, having given the driver one of his usual extravagant tips, walked lingeringly by Ida's side up the garden path.

Day was just breaking, and there was that intense stillness as of expectancy which precedes a summer sunrise. All Nature seemed to hold her breath in suspense, and look up, at first darkly as in doubt, then more brightly as in hope, till at last her god appears and floods her face with the joy of certainty. Now, however, it was rather "the raven's" than "the dove's" twilight, to use the poetic Jewish distinction between the darker and the lighter approaches of the dawn. Still, there was light enough for Ida to distinguish well-remembered objects.

"This was your garden, Archie," pausing at it for a moment.

"You remember it ?"

"Of course I remember it, and your promise."

"And your promise, Ida ?" Now reckless with the certainty that he would never again have such a chance.

He stepped forward, and stood opposite her with an expression of life and death suspense in his eager eyes.

"And your promise, Ida ? Do you remember ?"

Her eyes fell before his, and he could see in the growing light her face flush and pale again, almost as quickly as her heart beat.

She stood silent, for what could she say ? There was no misunderstanding or affecting to misunderstand the meaning of the allusion as interpreted by the intensity of his tone.

"When you gave me this," added Archie, as she did not answer, touching as he spoke the locket in which her hair was, "you said," he continued in great agitation, yet encouraged by her silence and consciousness ; "you said then you would be all I wanted you to be to me, if I asked you again when I was a man."

"You didn't ask me," she faltered at last, in a low voice.

"I didn't—I dared not. You seemed so far off and high above me till to-night. But now——"

"Now! It is too late now."

"Now it is not too late," seizing both her hands with the grasp of the drowning. "Ida, before it is too late, hear me. I love you; I love you with my whole soul. I have always loved you—always. It is I who have the first claim—I, not he. He was too late, if—if you ever cared for me at all," in a lowered tone that trembled with anxiety. "You did, Ida; you do."

"It is too late now," she said again, with a piteous ring of remorse in her voice.

"Too late! You do not know now what the words mean, Ida. But two months hence, or three months hence, when you are married, bound for life to a man for whom you do not care——"

"Archie, I must not listen; it isn't right."

"Is it right to do it? Is it right to marry without love? Is it right to him, even? You will be wretched; but, if that is nothing to you, will he be happy? Will he not be the more unhappy the more he loves you, if he does love you? Right! Ida, if you think only of what is right you cannot do this. It is not right in itself, or right to you, or right to him. It is all wrong and all wretchedness. Even if you cared for no one else—but you do," losing himself naturally in this intoxicating digression. "Oh, Ida, you do—you do care for me."

Her answer rose, silent as the roseate sunrise, to her cheeks, and Archie, with an audacity which surprised himself afterwards, took her in his arms and pressed his lips to hers in a clinging and passionate kiss. Having submitted to this in silence, what now could she say? In truth, Archie had cut the Gordian knot of the difficulty by this swashing blow. His kiss made Ida realise better than all the words in the world that the guilt of breaking off her engagement with Dick, deep as she felt it, was as nothing to the guilt of giving her hand to one man while her whole heart was another's. In fact, Archie by this kiss had roused the traitor within her heart to betray the citadel, if we may be pardoned this startlingly original image.

Having forced his answer from her lips in this audacious fashion, unrebuked, he took care to cut off her retreat to her old position by giving her no chance to speak at all for some minutes. He poured out his passion into her ear, and close to her ear, in a tempestuous torrent of whirling words which she could not have stemmed if she tried; but she did not try. She

gave herself up to the sweet intoxication of the moment, and forgot Mrs. Tuck, Dick, to-morrow—everything but Archie.

Mrs. John slept undisturbed for yet another hour. For another hour these two walked and sat together in the garden, in the dreamy light, and in a stillness so breathless that the leaves of the aspen seemed asleep. At last the sun rose, silent as a thought of God, and broke the spell, and all faded back into the light of common day. They walked once more through the garden, lingeringly, as Eve through Eden for the last time; and Archie, as they neared the house, plucked a rose, and shook off its tears of dew, shed at the sunset, not yet dried by its return, and gave it to Ida, and

drew
With one long kiss her whole soul through
Her lips, as sunlight drinketh dew.

Then he threw gravel with some vigour up at Mrs. John's window, which instantaneously produced the Rev. John on the quiver for a christening. As every baptism at birth by total immersion hastened appreciably the date of the millennium, he had strictly enjoined his parishioners to send for him and the doctor by the same messenger, who, that the servants might not be disturbed, was to do what Archie had just done—fling gravel at the window. Accordingly the Rev. John had no doubt at all that he was wanted by some one, and little doubt that this some one was Mrs. Platts; who had already made the considerable contribution to the millennium of five immaculately immersed babes, and was now expecting hourly to present a sixth to the Church. It was impossible, therefore, for Archie not to think of Mrs. Gamp and Mr. Pecksniff as the Rev. John shouted eagerly as he threw up the window:

"Is it Mrs. Platts?"

"No, uncle; it is I—Archie."

"Oh, Archie," with a sudden and deep drop of disappointment in his tone, "I shall be down in a minute."

"I've Ida with me, uncle. I wish you'd wake mother and tell her."

The Rev. John was not in the least surprised. He was hardly ever surprised. Things worked their way into his mind drop by drop, as through a filter, so that a sudden flood of amazement was well-nigh impossible. He woke Mrs. John deliberately, and said as he got back himself leisurely into bed:

"My dear, Archie and Ida are at the door. I thought it was Mrs. Platts's case."

"Who's at the door?"

"Archie and Ida."

"John, you're dreaming!"

"Why do you think so, dear?" perplexed, and half thinking there must be some truth in the accusation since she made it.

"Archie and Ida! Why, what time is it?"

"It's half-past four. I thought it was a christening when I heard the gravel at the window."

In a moment Mrs. John was at the window.

"Archie!"

"Yes, mother. Come down, Ida's here."

It did not take Mrs. John long to put on a dressing-gown, and a pair of slippers, and hurry down to the hall-door. She caught Ida in her arms, and kissed her again and again, and then held her out from her as though for reassurance that it was the girl herself.

"Ida, my dear child, where have you dropped from?"

"We've just dropped from heaven, mother," said Archie, as indeed they had. Mrs. John was not slow to catch and construe Archie's look of love as he said this, and Ida's answering blush. The hope of her life was fulfilled. Again she caught Ida in her arms and devoured her with kisses.

"But what has happened?"

"Get Ida to bed, and I'll tell you, mother. She's quite done up. She's been knocked about all night, in a collision, and on an engine."

"In a collision!"

"I'm not hurt in the least, thank you, Mrs. Pybua."

"No; she's not hurt, mother," said Archie, in answer to his mother's anxious look of enquiry, addressed to him. "But she's been nurse, surgeon, engine-driver, and a ministering angel-of-all-work, and must be completely knocked up."

Then Mrs. John, without another word, carried Ida off, hurried her upstairs, set to to undress her, as though she were a baby, and allowed herself to ask but one question, just to stay the parching thirst of her loving curiosity.

"You're my own daughter now, dear?" she whispered.

Whereupon Ida burst into tears! Certainly an amazing display of feeling for her. But she was utterly overdone, and the question brought the desperate difficulties in which she had involved herself vividly before her, just at the moment of

reaction after tense and continued excitement.

Mrs. John, setting down these tears to nervous prostration, stayed only long enough to soothe her; and then, leaving her to herself, she returned for a hurried toilet to her own room before she sought out Archie.

"She's accepted you?" she asked breathlessly, when she found him pacing to and fro in the dining-room.

Archie nodded brightly, and returned her gratulatory kiss.

"Yes; she's accepted me, mother; but at a great cost," he added, the brightness fading from his face.

Then, making his mother sit, and sitting by her side, he narrated all the incidents of that eventful night, Mrs. John the while breathless, or breathing exclamations of amazement or admiration. Yet will it be believed, that one of the things which struck this admirable little woman most was Archie's impropriety in beguiling Ida into that dim, still, dreamy twilight walk of an hour? After all, Mrs. John was but a woman, though the best of women.

"It was thoughtless and selfish, and unlike you, Archie. Any one might have seen you, or may have seen you at that hour. As for Ida, she's as much above the thought of such things as an angel. She's just grown up like a flower with her face turned always towards heaven, and with no idea at all of the earth, or the worm-casts beneath her. But you should have known better, and you did know better, Archie. However, it can't be helped now."

This bad business having thus been given over as hopeless, Mrs. John next addressed herself to the consideration of the difficulties of Ida's double engagement.

"I believe that mad dog business was got up by Mrs. Tuck. Yes, I do," in answer to Archie's smile. "That woman would take in anyone, and anyone could take in Ida."

Archie only laughed at this feminine interpretation of the affair.

"He'd hardly burn a hole in his arm, mother, as a mere stage accessory to the play. No; it was all luck. Any stable-boy would have done what he did, if he'd had the chance. He happened to be in the way, that's all."

"Very much in the way," echoed Mrs. John, in a tone at once petulant and perplexed, as with knit brow and troubled face she tried to see her way through the

business. But the thought uppermost in her mind was one of self-reproach. It somehow seemed as though she could bring only trouble into the lives of those she loved most. Was it not through her that Archie was disinherited, and if now Ida also was to be disinherited, as she was certain to be, would it not be indirectly her doing? But Archie's love would more than make up to Ida for this disinheritance. Well, Archie's love was worth a great deal. No one could set on it a higher value than she, his mother. But there was only his love. He had no means, or profession, or prospects. He had less than none. He was extravagant and in debt. Poor Mrs. John for years had scraped and screwed, and worn her old clothes till they were a shame in their shabbiness, and stinted the Rev. John in his charities, to supply this youth with money, which he flung away on things and persons that were worthless, or worse than worthless. It seemed in his blood—this extravagance.

He was not very vain, or very selfish. He loved—he worshipped—his mother, and would have gone to the ends of the earth to do her a kindness, or to spare her a pang. And yet, in part through sheer thoughtlessness, and in part through a tendency to recklessness derived from his father, he flung away in waste and on wasters the money that would have made all the difference between easy comfort and anxious economy to poor Mrs. John. It is true that Mrs. John never complained—not merely because she was so generous and so loved him, but also because she had rooted in her mind an absurd idea that she owed him all, and more than all she could scrape together, as an indemnity for his disinheritance, of which she held herself to be the cause.

But she must now speak. For Ida's sake she must speak now, since her lot was to be bound up henceforth with Archie's. The girl would, beyond a doubt, be disinherited for accepting Archie, and what had he to offer her?

"Archie," she said at last, after thinking this thing well over and in all its bearings, speaking in a tone that expressed the deep grief it gave her to pain him; "Archie, Ida gives up everything for you. Mr. Tuck will resent so deeply her marrying you, and Mrs. Tuck her not marrying her nephew, that she's certain to sacrifice all her brilliant prospects for you. She will think nothing of the sacrifice, or rather she will be glad of the sacrifice: but for that

reason you will think the more of it, Archie, and will try to make for her the position she gives up for you. You'd not like to drag her down to debts and difficulties and all that degradation. Archie, it would kill her," vehemently.

"I've been a selfish brute!" he exclaimed, starting up suddenly, heart-stricken. They were the first words of even indirect rebuke he had ever heard from those lips, and they therefore struck straight home.

"You've been thoughtless, Archie; but it was not of you, dear, I was thinking." And then after a pause, in which her thoughts wandered far back, she continued: "I was thinking of a woman I once knew who was like Ida, not so beautiful or so clever, or of such spirit, but like her in heart, innocent, trustful, clinging as a child. She married, against the wish of her family, a man who was thoughtless and extravagant, and who dragged her down into all that degradation of debt. He was very generous; he worshipped her with all his soul; he would have died for her; and he killed her, Archie—he killed her. I do not mean that she died of these terrible anxieties; I mean that but for them she would not have died." Then rising, putting a hand on each of his shoulders, and looking up into his face with a pathetic pleading in her eyes for pardon for the pain she was going to give, she said tremulously: "She died in giving birth to you, Archie."

Mrs. John would have endured anything rather than have dealt this blow in self-defence, but for Ida's sake and for Archie's, she dealt it, and suffered in dealing it at least as much pain as she gave.

Archie stood white and silent, looking down into the appealing face upturned to his, but not seeing it—seeing only his mother's wretched and wrecked life, and thinking that what his father had been to her, he had been to Mrs. John, and promised to be to Ida. It was a revelation of himself to himself in letters of fire, that not only glared but burned, and it was the turning-point of his life. He was "converted," to borrow a theological expression, but to apply it in the only sense in which it can be true; that is to say, his whole nature was not changed, but purified, in a moment. The instantaneous transmutation of a base into a noble nature by any process of fire is as little likely as the transmutation by fire of a base metal into gold; but there is no doubt that, in a moment and so as by fire, what is base in a

man's nature may be purged away, and the gold already there may be refined. It was so with Archie at this moment. Such words from Mrs. John were as a refiner's fire. They burned into his very soul with all the agony of fire, but also with all its refining effect. He turned away and leant his head on his arm upon the mantelpiece, and poor Mrs. John, miserable with remorse, soothed him as she used to soothe him when he was a child.

THE LANDES OF TO-DAY.

VERY few travellers turn aside from the beaten paths of travel to explore what is perhaps the wildest, and certainly the least known of French departments—the stern and solitary Landes. There, hemmed in by the Atlantic to the west, and the mountains to the south, the oldest of the prehistoric races in Europe seems to stand at bay. The Basques can count kindred with Finn, Magyar, and Esthonian in our own time, and with the vanished Etruscans of the past. Their very language is a relic of Turanian antiquity, and the stock from which they spring a Mongolian one, though Celt and Goth and Frank, mushroom invaders, as they deem, have thrust them long ago into this forgotten corner of Gaul. Shut out, as a non-Romance speaking people, from the sympathies of the so-called Latin Union, they remain a tribe as peculiar, though rooted to the ground, as the restless gipsies themselves. And the French Basques are in some respects worse off than those of Spain, as being denied any recognition of their nationality. Their cousins on the Spanish bank of the Bidassoa count for very much more, in the kingdom of “the Spains,” than do the poor handful of Basques in centralised France. Spanish Navarre is no mere unit of a symmetrical set of districts, to be manipulated by a prefect and sub-prefects, according to the desire of the government of Paris. But the French Basque has no privileges or local laws, such as those which Castilian royalty, when it is not too strong, treats with ostentatious respect. Had there been such institutions in French Basqueland, they would have been swept away—as were the customs of Brittany, as, but for English sway, would have been the old Roman law of Jersey and Guernsey—before the rush of the great French Revolution.

If you talk with discontented French

workmen in the larger towns, in Toulouse, say, or in Bordeaux, you will probably hear the Basques of the Landes described as “*ces réactionnaires*,” and be told that they are under the corporate thumb of the priests, detest enlightenment, and are ready, at a given signal, to hoist the white flag, and fight for the king. None of these assertions will be found, on a more intimate knowledge of the people and their habits of thought, to be true. Your Basque is a sound Catholic, but he is much less under ecclesiastical authority than either the melancholy Breton or the Romanised Gaul of the Pyrenean slopes. He does not even dislike enlightenment for other people, so as it lets him and his womankind alone, to knit their stockings, intermarry, rear young horses and bulls for the upland markets, and keep up the old ostracism of strangers, after the old fashion. Glib revolutionary talkers in city cafés point to the Landes as a source of danger. But the Rue Jérusalem and the French Ministry of the Interior know better, and never send a detective to watch the Landes. There are Celtic peasants in Brittany and La Vendée who really would shed their blood, if properly stimulated, for the successor of St. Louis. But there is no personal loyalty, in the sterile Landes, to attach itself to the House of Bourbon. How should there be? The Basques had no sovereign duchess, like that Anne of Brittany who carried off the regalia when she went to wed a French king. They were more worried by farmers-general and intendants, under the old system, than they are now by plausible, and often well-meaning officials. Henry the Fourth himself, so idolised in neighbouring Béarn, is less forgotten than ignored by the descendants of his former subjects. To them a king of France was, as king of Navarre, a master to be feared, not a chieftain to be loved. They have no suppressed royal race of their own. They have no nobility. Their old families are as proud of their caste as Brahmins and Rajpoots are, but no one of Basque descent aspires to be above the condition of a simple yeoman.

It is very hard to win, so town-folk say, the confidence of the Basques. Such a task is probably very much easier to an Englishman than to the average Frenchman. But then no Englishman who has not a rare command of language, combined with tact and patience, is qualified to dive into the hearts of this reticent race. The

French of Paris, the eternal taking off of the hat, the flourishes of Gallic politeness, slightly caricatured, by which the Laurence Sternes of our decade try to make their way, will not answer with the shy, low-statured, manly people who inhabit the western deserts of France. Scraps of Languedoc patois, a Spanish proverb or two, such as the Pyrenean smugglers use, and good, rough, blundering Anglo-French, do stand the tourist in some stead. As usual, frank manners and a pleasant address serve to thaw the frost of suspicion. But many a glib visitor is suspected of being that wolf in sheep's clothing, a Parisian journalist in disguise, come to earn editorial cash by depicting the savages of the Landes. And many a young Basque who has been surprised in the act of conversing or flirting in his own wild tongue, will doggedly persist when questioned that he knows no language but French, and has no dialect of his own, just as a gipsy will.

A Basque, in Gascony and Béarn, is spoken of with a certain amount of prejudice, just like a Welshman in the English border shires, or a Fleming in Picardy. They are not thought clever; they are old-fashioned. But many of those who talk of "ces Basques" are probably of almost unmixed Basque blood, and you may trace the peculiar Basque black eye—so melancholy, but not unkindly—the square mouth, and high cheek-bones, all the way to Perpignan or Pampeluna. They are supposed to have invented the bayonet, but with this philanthropic contrivance ends the list of Basque contributions to the stock in trade of civilised society. In no workshop will you find a Basque journeyman, in no factory a Basque operative. Yet, in their own villages, the smith, the farrier, and the wheelwright are sure to be Basques, and dexterous in their craft, while the carpenter and the glazier and the tiler are almost as certainly "Frenchmen" and foreigners.

The Basques are brave enough. They are a little too brave, for they are slightly quarrelsome. The so-called "Frenchman" from a neighbouring department, when he goes among them, as commercial traveller, skilled artisan, or hawker, soon learns that he must suspend his harmless crowing and renounce his martial swagger, if he desires his whole skin. Basques rarely brag, but they are jealous and resentful as so many Spaniards. They never use the knife in their broils, though vendettas, and what in Ireland would be called faction-fights, are frequent amongst

them. The cudgel is their only weapon. None of the young men of a Landes village would dream of walking or stalking—for they are oftenest on stilts—to church, without his tough ash-plant or oaken sapling attached to his wrist by a leathern loop. And the curé, in his cassock, often has to scurry out into the porch to check a bout at single-stick as the worshippers sally forth. Their "gourdins" do not come from the treeless Landes, but are imported from Gascony by fluent dealers, who descant on the relative merits of the knotted black-thorns, crab-sticks, and young ash-trees of their stock. In their encounters they show more courage than skill, having, like Spaniards, only one cut and one guard, and a Berkshire or Wilts player would probably discomfit their champions easily enough. Some musical taste they have, and many hamlets contain amateurs famous for their manipulation of the flute or the old French hunting-horn, but the favourite airs are always sad and plaintive. The Basques sing, too, in sweet, low voices, with a marked preference for the melancholy ballads that in western France are called "complaintes," but they are shy of singing before a stranger. They dance with singular spirit and animation at their rare merrymakings, to the strains of fiddle, and castanets, and bag-pipe; but holidays are not so frequent among them as with the Latin races.

The chief external characteristic of the French Basques is the extraordinary skill with which they walk on stilts. This hereditary accomplishment has been forced upon them, so to speak, by the nature of the country they inhabit—a waste of shifting sands, intersected by runlets of water that produce admirable pasturage, but in places occasion very dangerous morasses. The Basques, used from infancy to make their way through drift and quagmire, seem sometimes to be actually unaware that they are perched up aloft, like so many storks or herons, as they tend their sheep or carry home their oat-sheaves. And the women are, perhaps, still defter on their stilts than are the men, who invariably cast off their wooden props when cudgel play, or a bargain, claims attention, and who are, also, a little uneasy in the presence of strangers.

It is in marshy districts, where straggling lambs and half-wild calves have to be sought for, or in deep loose sand, that the stilts find their main employment, and best exhibit the dexterity of the wearers, who, with the help of an iron-shed pole, can

knit the woollen-stockings and nightcaps which both sexes are clever in making, practise the flute and the binion, and even, it is said, go to sleep for hours. Nothing more amuses the people of the Landes than when a troop of strolling mountebanks, with its two or three damsels in spangled muslin, and mounted on stilts, ventures into Basqueland. To see the saltimbanques in gay apparel painfully trying to do, for money, what the spectators have done with practised ease since childhood, evokes Homeric bursts of laughter, usually followed by a shower of sous. It sometimes happens, in rural life, that the stilts act as safeguards. For the *fondrières*, as the French call them—"funda" is the Spanish word employed by the small dark people of the land—are quicksands as perilous to pass as any between Avranches and St. Michael's Mount, and the sinking over-deep of the ashen prop is a warning that has saved many a herdsman's life, when an incautious foot would have been held for ever in the grip of the tenacious mire below. The list of annual victims by such accidents is almost wholly made up of travelling tinkers, chapmen, knife-grinders, and especially glaziers or plumbers in quest of a job.

French statistical books describe the Department of the Landes as an agricultural district, but the country is really a pastoral one. Wheat can scarcely be grown. The only crop consists of oats or rye. The maize-flour that is wanted for the huge yellow loaves, the thin hot tortillas, and the bowls of polenta, must be purchased from the more fertile province to the east. Tiny porkers, which there are no vegetables to feed, eggs, salt, home-spun woollens, horses, and those yearling cattle that the Irish peasants designate as "bulsheens," are the exports of the Landes. The Basques value their long-legged sheep more for their fleeces than for their mutton, while their poultry, as in all sandy districts, yield eggs in abundance, but are difficult to fatten for the table. Horses are their most valuable staple; but, though they sell so many, they have none of that ostentatious jockeyship or knowingness which distinguish those French Yorkshiremen, the bargaining Normans. Indeed, a Basque is bad at a bargain, naming his price at the first word, and sticking to it, simply. The young horses, a legacy of the Saracens, are gallant brutes enough, fleet, well-shaped, fit for the saddle, and with gentle tempers, the result of the kind handling to which they have been accus-

tomed, for the Basque is very tender with animals, as with children.

On the verge of the Landes you begin to lose sight of the monotonous blue blouse of the French peasant. The blouse is a Gaulish garb, and the Basques are not Gauls. The brown jackets, and the brown, blue, or red berets of the men, are not very picturesque. You may see the same jackets and caps throughout the Pyrenean districts. But the women's blue or crimson kirtles, their snoods and coifs, and their rare holiday finery, are better worth notice. There is a peculiar narrow-striped woollen stuff of many colours, and with a thread of gold running across the gay stripes at intervals, which is, or was, manufactured only at Bayonne, and lurks in deep old cedar chests, to be worn by the daughters of rich farmers on Church festivals, and days of family rejoicing. And, amongst the gold and silver crosses, and ear and finger rings worn on such occasions, you may sometimes see necklaces, either composed of heavy golden beads or balls, or of dainty filigree work, as fine as that of old Genoa.

There is something sad about the people's lives, as there commonly is where the land is sterile, and the toil monotonous. But compared with Brittany, the only other isolated part of France, the Landes are cheerful. Your Breton peasant takes his pleasure sadly; even a wedding, among the grey cromlechs and menhirs of the Nine Bishoprics, might well be mistaken for a funeral. But in their modest, gentle way, the Basques know how to enjoy themselves on occasion, tribe consorting with tribe, and sept with sept, so that no Montague may be present to mar the mirth of the assembled Capulets.

One of the most marked peculiarities of the Basques is their aversion to military service. This, of course, they share with other Frenchmen. We need not go back so far as the end of the eighteenth century, when the dreaded conscription was new, and a recruiting colonel told Brigadier-General Wolfe-Tone, the Irish rebel, that "we have to tie the jeunesses, neck and heels, like so many calves, and fling them into a cart." But four hundred pounds sterling became the market-price of a substitute before Napoleon had played his last stakes at Leipsic and Waterloo. And even in these piping times of peace, when a stern law of equality forbids the purchase of a proxy to endure barrack discomforts, no French family above the class of day-labourers will allow a son to put on the

hated livery of the army until bribes, and prayers, and tears have been exhausted, and doctor, deputy, and mayor, and councillor - general invoked, to save Alphonse or Joseph from the tax of blood. The people of the Landes have very seldom any friends at Court. While substitutes were to be bought, they would club their money to buy them, every aunt and cousin contributing to the ransom. Now that such exemption is beyond purchase, with a sad simplicity of bearing, the Basques submit to the inevitable. Their young men come passive and resigned to the barrack-gate on the appointed day. And it is rare to see, what may so often be seen in rural France, mounted gendarmes scouring the country, to discover in whose hayloft the future defender of his country is hidden. The quiet pride of the lonely race would revolt from the ignominy of being led into Dax with manacled hands, and tied to the crupper of a troop-horse. Yet the Basques have a bad example close at hand, for in the adjoining department of the Lower Pyrenees the recruiting-officer averages, since the German War, on his black list the extraordinary number of fourteen thousand "réfractaires," runaway conscripts, whom the peasantry of the High Pyrenees for the most part harbour at the expense of their anxious relatives at home, and who take refuge in Andorre and Spain, when hard pressed by the police.

It is very difficult to elicit from a Basque how much and how little he knows concerning the origin of his people. Most likely he does not trouble himself about niceties of ethnology, but believes what his grandmother told him about his own lineal superiority to the upstart Gauls. What he dislikes is French centralisation, French law, the minute, rigid accuracy with which everything gets mapped and gauged, and weighed, and measured, the pressure of the Government at election times, or when a loan is launched. All this he calls "chicane." He wants to be let alone. He has no sympathy with the red flag, and a Communist lecturer would be ill-received in the Landes. Those socialist doctrines which are so coquetted with, even by the rich, in south-eastern France are execrated in Basqueland. "How I would barricade my house, and how I would fire my gun from the upper windows!" is no unusual comment on the part of a Basque yeoman fresh from the newspaper study of a revolutionary discourse. Of the one great historical event in which they played a part they

seem quite oblivious. That, of course, is the memorable slaughter of Roncesvalles, when

Roland brave, and Olivier,
And every paladin and peer,

perished in the defiles of the Pyrenees, slain, as mediæval minstrels loved to declare, by the Paynim. Yet it was by Christian Basques, not by turbaned Moors, that the rear-guard of Charles the Great's army was so signally cut to pieces in the Fontarabian pass.

There is an aristocracy in Basqueland, just as there is one in the Baltic provinces, which are tenanted by a kindred race, and under Russian rule. But, just as no Esthonian or Lett claims to be of the rank of gentleman, so are the counts and marquises who own estates and inhabit castles in the Landes of quite another stock from the people of the country. These "seigneurs" are not disliked by the Basque peasantry, as happens east of the Rhone, but neither are they regarded with clannish affection, as is often the case in Morbihan or Finisterre. Oddly enough, they are generally called Gascons, seldom Frenchmen, whereas a lawyer, a school-master, a stray workman, is invariably deemed to be as French as Hugues Capet. Hospitable kindly magnates are these viscounts, barons, and so forth, whose dilapidated châteaux overlook a waste of sand, and whose business relations with their vassals are generally very good. The titled families who still exist in the poorer parts of rustic France are, as a rule, good-natured, frugal, and delighted to make acquaintance with a foreigner who is fluent and unabashed in his French. Their own lives are strangely dull. None of the gaiety that we associate with continental life seems to fall in their way. There are bright-eyed, gentle young ladies in Basqueland to whom even the mild dissipations of English country existence would appear as a whirlwind of excitement, girls who never had a dance since they left school, and who never saw a flower-show, or a race, or a cricket-match, or a regatta. There are a few packs of hounds kept up at a cheap rate, but they suffer from a superfluity of foxes. The "red rascals," as the late Mr. Apperley was wont to call them, are as abundant in the sandy hillocks of Basqueland as rabbits in a warren, and after a little gentle exercise in front of the bewildered dogs, run to earth as promptly as rabbits would do. It is from the Landes that half the bag-foxes in England originally come, and nothing can be more

curious than to watch the unwilling steps of snared Reynard as, leashed and muzzled, he finds himself led by his captor along the dusty road.

A doctor, in the Landes, as in Sologne or Vendée, has no bed of roses to lie upon. He is in constant antagonism with a rival professional, the sorcerer, or witch-healer, who cures ague and fever by the aid of simples and charms; and he finds himself eternally thwarted by those maleficent hags, the "wise women," or "diseases," who are the pest of rural France, and who negative every precept he can utter as to fresh air, cleanliness for the sick, and especially the hygienic conditions necessary for the rearing of weakly children. It may seem scarcely credible that in the nineteenth century there should be crones who make a living by preaching dirt, vermin, and neglect as essential for the health of the young; but every village practitioner from Tours to Bayonne knows, to his vexation, that such is the case. Medical science does not receive, in the country, the unhesitating respect which it meets with in the great towns. If a rural doctor is also a skilled veterinary surgeon, as sometimes happens, well and good. The cure of a lame horse or a sick cow does more to influence the bucolic mind than the most eloquent of expositions.

The Basques are superstitious. This is a result that follows, as the merest matter of course, from their isolated position and the seclusion of their lives, but they have no beliefs so monstrous as those of the were-wolf of Anjou, the vampire of Brittany, or the "grosse bête" of Poitou. The vampire, in especial, as a belief almost confined to non-Aryan races, and which probably existed in Brittany before there was a Breton in the Armorican peninsula, might have been expected to reappear amongst the Turanian Basques. Yet the wild mythology of the Landes finds no place for this or for cognate horrors. What really impresses the Basque imagination is the malignant power of the forces of Nature, the peril of hail to the crops, of blight, and weevil, and black-fly, of cutting winds to kill the tender lambs, of shifting sands that swallow up green pastures, of birds and beasts of prey, and all the ills that farmers' flesh is heir to in that climate and country. The Landes are too far from the high Pyrenees to have many visits from the wolves which, in spite of breechloaders and strychnine, are now more numerous than when Louis

the Fifteenth was king, and which work such mischief among upland flocks. Hence the wolf is boldly called a wolf, whereas the fox is almost always spoken of respectfully as "the red one," while the very farmers who pay the trapper from Béarn, with his beagles and snares, who comes to rid them of the robber, lay down the coins in a shamefaced way, and scrupulously with the left hand, on a mounting-block or bank, as if fearful lest the foxes should resent the thinning of their numbers. Eagle, kite, osprey, and that even more dreaded enemy of the lambs, the Pyrenean vulture, are generally designated by a mere wave of the hands, as if in imitation of the flapping of a bird's wings.

The Basque agriculturist stands in great awe of the weather. Sharp unseasonable winds, the icy tramontana from due south, will make havoc among the woolly weaklings of his flock. Hail, or that heavy semi-tropical rain which sometimes comes down like a waterspout, will crush the tender sprouts of his oat-crop or thresh the grain out of the silvered ear. Hence his nervous solicitude lest the spirits that he vaguely believes to preside over showers and sunshine should take umbrage. Even to point a finger at a black cloud is regarded, in the Landes, as rash and foolish. The cloud—who knows?—may be annoyed, or, if not the cloud, then some mysterious being behind that vaporous veil. Wise old heads are shaken at the sight of a sharp-pointed lightning-conductor towering aloft over the topmost roof of some model farm. Such a piece of apparatus appears to the natives like Ajax defying the thunderbolts. A strolling photographer meets with but a cold reception amongst a people who hold that his method involves the taking a liberty with the sun, and who are by no means comfortable as to the morality of dark chambers, negative-plates, and mysterious chemicals. On the other hand, the Landais are very willing to give every reasonable encouragement to the roving artist who comes to take their portraits in the time-honoured old-fashioned style, "like a Christian," as they say. The Raphael who enters on this humble walk of art will find that his clients are not unwilling to pay in copper and silver for the narrow gilt frame of the picture or for its glazing, but that they consider goose and maize-cakes, garlic, soup, and wine, ample remuneration for mere colours and handiwork.

It is generally a very unprofitable task

to catechise a middle-aged Basque as to the nature or reasons of his superstitions and strange ways, while the juvenile members of the tribe are sensitive to any attempt at cross-examination. It is better to wait and glean what odd phrases and dogmatic assertions may fall in one's way than to ask questions which are almost certain to seal up the fountain of information. No peasant, of any stock, likes to be thrust into the witness-box. The Bavarian boor who points to the cherries on the tree, or the sheaf left in the field, or the hops unpicked, and says with a nod, "Those are for Wotan; mustn't forget the Old One, brother," assumes an austere air and looks cudgels and pitchforks at the foreigner, who imagines that he has caught a real nineteenth-century Pagan and tries to put him through his paces as to the gods of Valhalla. Probably these strange survivals of a remote past are very imperfectly understood by those who are yet under their influence, and whose education is too narrow to allow them to measure their myths by other standards. One thing, as concerns the Basques, is patent and notable. The people ask only to be let alone, dread change, reform, and improvement, and wish to be left to their stilts and their isolation, and such of their old ways as have survived the touch of time. And this is the most distinguishing feature of those who inhabit the Landes of to-day.

A PERFECT DAY.

We went together up the side
Of some far hill, on that far day;
Where, in the grass, clear streamlets glide,
Where flickering shadows softly play—
Ah me!
That this should be but one long memory!
A brook was singing in the sun,
As if it strove our lips to teach
Some secret of its waters run,
Some words that scarce find sound in speech;
And so
We drank love's cup, and listened to its flow,
My sweet, we lingered near the stream
Till melting gold turned all to grey;
And now it only seems a dream
The memory of that perfect day.
Thus pass
Love's hours like breath-stains breathed upon a glass

DEAN WHARTON'S DAUGHTER.

A STORY IN SEVEN CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER IV. GOSSIP.

WISE Jack was right. James Browne, being James Browne, the Deanery, unaccustomed though it was to throwing open its gates to strangers, saw a great

deal—a very great deal—of this one. He fell into his place in the quiet household in the most natural manner possible. After that first astounding afternoon no one seemed to see anything at all strange in it. He was "James" to the good old Dean, and it was indeed only his absence that was at all likely to be commented upon by anyone in the old corner-house. The Dean's Agatha welcomed him, his boys made a hero of him, while Frank, waxing more friendly and confidential still as the days went on, called him "Uncle James" to his sunburnt face, and in return graciously rescinded her earlier decision, and permitted him to hail her "Frank" without remonstrance. Indeed, before the friendship was many weeks old, she had kindly confided to him Agatha's recently-expressed views regarding the new arrivals; her present friendly and unrestrained reception of him, James Browne, being, as she insisted, entirely on the "aged relative" basis, but for which Frances was furthermore careful to assure him his present footing at the Deanery would have been a simple impossibility.

"So you see," Frank added on that occasion with a charming candour intended to be reassuring, "it's very lucky you are papa's friend, and rather old, or we should have never known how nice you are, and you would never have known how nice we are, so it's all right."

But the Major did not look altogether so satisfied. What if chattering Frank were right? and he saw no reason why she should not be. What if the smiles and welcome with which the Dean's daughter was wont to greet him—that had even now become so dear to him—were only for her father's friend, and nothing more? Her father's "old" friend. Was he really so very old? For the first time in his life James Browne sat counting up his years, and wondering if his youth, in these young girls' eyes at least, had really fled.

But whatever might be the effect of Frank's little confidences, they did not deter the steadfast-faced Major from his purpose. It must be something more than the fifteen or sixteen years between them, he told himself, that should rob him of his heart's desire. This being so, as the days went by the Deanery saw more of him rather than less, until at last there were those in Postleton who began to bethink themselves that they ought to have something to say in the matter.

That Postleton — cathedral-shadowed

city as it was—possessed its fair share of gossips and busybodies, I dare not deny. Some indeed went further, and said it had, indeed, more than its share; but these were always understood as casting no particular reflection on Postleton generally. There was, I may say, no doubt at whom their remarks were levelled, and certainly if ever mortal woman was—in her own belief—born to set the world to rights, to take it by force and mend its ways, whether it would or not, that woman was the Rectoress of St. Swithin's.

Mrs. Tyerman was a lady of majestic, I may say awe-inspiring appearance, and was wont, when holding forth for the benefit of any victims she might have captured, to address them in a fine deep voice that added greatly to the terror of the occasion. Parishes marked no boundary for the Rectoress of St. Swithin's; she would not only bounce from one end to the other of her own half-a-dozen times a day, but she would bounce into neighbouring parishes, to the mutual dismay of priest and people. And then the Rector, as might be expected, would be appealed to. Poor little Rector! what could he do? He who was himself never really safe from that overwhelming presence even in his own pulpit, save on those days, it might be, when as a mark of high displeasure Mrs. Tyerman would betake herself to the cathedral, and there loudly lift up her voice in behalf of the miserable sinners around her.

She it was who now felt herself called on to remark upon the Major's intimacy at the Deanery. "And it is not only there," she said, "it is the same everywhere; he is for ever at Agatha Wharton's elbow. What can her father mean by allowing it? But I shall speak to him—I shall certainly speak to the Dean."

"If you will take my advice you will certainly do nothing of the kind," said Mrs. Dorman, the invalid Indian Judge's wife, on whom the Rectoress was calling.

"It is by no means the first time," Mrs. Tyerman went on, not noticing the interruption; "but if you will, go on with your work—your knitting, or whatever it was you were doing."

"I don't knit—I was doing nothing, in fact. You were saying?"

Fat, round-about little Mrs. Dorman cared not one brass farthing for Mrs. Tyerman nor her awe-inspiring voice. She sat with calmly-folded hands and placid smile; an unmistakable twinkle was in her rather sleepy blue eyes.

Her visitor eyed her silently for the space of half a minute, then, I think, the futility of anything she might trouble herself to say in that quarter dawned upon the Rectoress.

"About Agatha Wharton, yes. It is by no means the first time either. There was that Captain Danby, he was always there."

"Men will go where pretty girls are," interrupted Mrs. Dorman.

"Pretty girls have no business to get themselves talked about."

"Who talks about her?" Mrs. Dorman was sitting up in her chair; she spoke quite sharply.

"Who?" echoed her visitor, and for a moment actually appeared unable to say more. "Why, everybody."

"Then everybody ought to be ashamed. Is a girl bound to send a man away the moment he begins to make himself agreeable to her?"

"She is bound not to allow herself to be talked about."

"But if, as you yourself seem to imply, people will talk?"

"They never talked about me, Mrs. Dorman."

"No," said Mrs. Dorman, "really! Well, they did about me, a good deal on the whole, I'm afraid. You see there are a great many men in India, and they make themselves very pleasant."

"At any rate I hope you will not speak on the subject in that decidedly flippant manner to Agatha Wharton."

"I hope I may be allowed to speak to Miss Wharton on that or any other subject as I may see fit," said Agatha's defender quietly.

"By all means," Mrs. Tyerman acquiesced with a little flutter of her bonnet-strings, rising as she spoke; "but I have a duty to perform. I shall most certainly speak to the Dean."

"Which I don't believe even she will have the face to do," said little Mrs. Dorman to her husband when giving—as she did with much gusto—an account of the interview.

CHAPTER V. COME BACK.

MRS. TYERMAN'S threat was never carried out; even she, I suppose, as little Mrs. Dorman had prophesied, not caring to face the quiet, courteous old Dean on such an errand.

So time sped on. Autumn had sighed itself somewhat blusteringly out; and winter,

like old age, had stolen quietly, almost imperceptibly in.

As time went on, and the Major became, if that were possible, a still more frequent visitor to the Deanery, his confidence did not increase, and he saw no way to speaking what was nearest to his heart. At times it had seemed to him indeed that the time for speaking would never come to him at all. Was he as the days went on becoming less to the Dean's daughter instead of more? Were her smiles, her welcome, really losing something of their warmth and readiness? Was she a goddess still, but a goddess freezing into marble as his own fire and ardour increased? Latterly there were days even when he thought she shunned him, and when the remembrance that another had been beforehand with him would force itself upon him and haunt him with a persistency that made the outlook very dark indeed. For of course he, too, had heard of Captain Danby. Mrs. Tyerman, for one, had taken care that he should not be in ignorance on that subject.

That the Major eluded that lady in every possible way I need not say. At the first sound of that dreaded voice he would turn and flee. But this was not always possible. Calm and impassive as the Major could be, the Rectoress knew well where the shoe pinched, and pertinaciously insisted whenever they met at social reunions, street corners, she cared not where, upon trying it on.

"The unfortunate part of it is," she loudly declared one day, under the very walls of the Deanery, where she had captured her victim coming out; "the unfortunate part of it is the girl cares for him still—anyone can see it. Oh, she is very much altered—very much. But, as I was saying the other day, the man may come back yet. You military men seem to think you can let a girl down and pick her up as you please."

Mrs. Tyerman came to a full stop. The Major's dark face was quiet and impassive as usual, but there was something in the keen grey eyes, which Jack had likened to gimlets, that she had never seen there before. What was it the owner of the eyes was saying?

"Say what you choose of us, Mrs. Tyerman, but I must ask you to understand for the future I utterly decline to hear you discuss Miss Wharton or her affairs." The Major raised his hat and was gone.

Mrs. Tyerman stood looking after him,

almost doubting her own identity. This was worse than Mrs. Dorman.

And the victorious Major! The Rectoress might have taken comfort to herself could she have heard him, as he strode barrackward, repeating her lately uttered words. "She cares for him still; the man may come back yet."

It was already growing late, but he repeated them to himself a good many times before the day was done. They haunted his dreams, they were on his lips the first thing when he awoke the next morning.

It was not the custom for the troops at Postleton to attend the cathedral, though a red coat or two, with its accompaniment of gold lace, was generally to be espied gleaming here and there at morning service. One of the stray red coats on the Sunday following Mrs. Tyerman's rebuff was the Major himself, but he, as you may suppose, was often to be found there. This morning service had already begun when he entered. The Dean's family were long since in their places, and the Dean's James, who was wont to find a seat with them, had to content himself with a modest place among the crowd of general worshippers, from whence, however, he could catch glimpses of the face for which he hungered, and which, I fear, was, on this particular morning at least, all that he had gone there for.

Jack's fresh young voice rang out from his place in the choir; the Dean himself preached the sermon; but neither Jack's fresh young voice, nor the Dean's silvery tones, reached him. For James Browne just now there was only one voice in all the world, and he was telling himself, alas, that it would have been better for him, perhaps, if he had never heard it.

But other eyes were upon the Dean's daughter this morning, and upon the Major too. The Rector of St. Swithin's was breathing freely in his own pulpit. He was in disgrace, and his very much the better half was proclaiming it aloud, as was her wont, in furs and rustling winter garments, to the best families in Postleton.

Service over, choir and clergy were filing from their places, then Mrs. Tyerman, scarcely waiting for the last surplice to flutter and disappear, elbowed her way out with a nod here and there, reaching the great west-door just in time to lay a detaining hand upon a soldierly figure leaving it.

"Captain Danby!" she said.

When the Dean's daughter, one of the last to leave, came out some three or four

minutes later, she came straight upon the two still standing there.

Poor Agatha! She saw at once who Mrs. Tyerman's companion was. A flush came to her cheek, a little throb to her heart, but that was all. Then she put out her hand.

"How do you do?" she said quietly, so quietly that the captain, who was looking for something quite different—surprise, pleasure, agitation—lost some of his own coolness and began a hurried enquiry after all at the Deanery.

Frank and the Major were not far behind. As the three—Agatha, Mrs. Tyerman, and Captain Danby—turned down the path between the leafless elms, these two appeared at the big door.

"Good gracious!" cried Frank, coming to a standstill at sight of the retreating figures; and Jack, who had just come up, made a face of disgust.

It was not much either to say or do, but the Major had seen enough. He needed to ask no questions, he knew at once what had happened. Mrs. Tyerman's words had fulfilled themselves, and "the man had come back." For a moment or two he was conscious of nothing else, then Frank's voice recalled him.

"She will never ask him in, Jack."

"By George!" cried Jack with a savage jump, "but she has, though! Oh, come along, Major, and let's turn him out."

The Deanery door, through which the three had disappeared, stood hospitably open still, but the Major shook his head.

"Not in all this war-paint and feathers. What would Mrs. Tyerman say!" and with a farewell wave of his hand he was gone, spurs jingling, chains rattling.

The two young people stood looking after the brilliantly-clad figure.

"Well," said Jack, "to think he should be as afraid of old Mother T. as all that!"

Frank looked at Jack a moment, a funny little look had stolen to her eyes, then: "Oh, Jack," she cried, "who is the duffer now, I should like to know?"

CHAPTER VI. SHUT OUT.

WHEN Guy Danby turned his back on Postleton and upon the Dean's daughter, as he told himself for ever, he was quite conscious of his own perfidy and dishonour. But the knowledge, as you may suppose, troubled him but little. The only thing that did trouble him, and what he was not at all prepared for, was to find that having so turned his back upon it, he was wishing

himself back in the quiet city once more. As the weeks rolled on, and the faraway beautiful face continued to haunt not only his days but his dreams, he could combat the spell no longer. Postleton was to be revisited, the dropped threads taken up; it was to be a simple thing enough. But the Dean's daughter met him, as we have seen, and suddenly the dreams in her behalf seemed to melt and vanish. How he clung to them then, how more and more dear she became to him as he found her slipping from him!

In the days that followed on that Sunday, although he got no invitation to enter the Deanery, and although his welcome there was of the scantiest, he could not keep away. The love denied caused his own passion to rage and burn with a fierceness he could no longer control, and avoid, repel him as she might and did, he told himself that he would speak and she should listen.

During these days the Dean's James came not at all to the old corner-house in the Close, and the Dean's daughter, who, too, had her secret, was thankful to remember that she had kept it so well.

And now it wanted but a week to Christmas. Winter had already set his seal on earth, air, and water. Quiet ponds hidden away in unfrequented hollows resounded with the ring of skates, and the shouts of healthful voices. By white, wind-swept roads the tall trees stood black and bare-armed, and over all a leaden sky gave promise of winter's crown—a fall of snow. A few feathery flakes were already softly floating here and there as Agatha Wharton came walking briskly along the high-road some two miles beyond Postleton. She had been lunching at a neighbouring rectory. Arthur had promised to meet her, but as yet he was nowhere to be seen. Presently a turn in the road brought an approaching figure in sight. Not Arthur's slight, trim figure and light, boyish step—this was that of a man, tall, square-shouldered, well set up, with a soldierly swing and tread.

Agatha recognised it at once. One look at his face, and she knew what he had come for. One look at hers, and he knew the utter hopelessness of his errand. But it did not deter him.

"Don't send me away," he said sharply, as after a word or two she once more put out her hand. "I came out here purposely to meet you, to speak to you."

Then Agatha Wharton knew that she

must submit herself to her fate, and hastened her homeward footsteps as the only thing left her to do.

"I think you must know what I have come out here to say, what I must say?"

"No, no," she interrupted him. "If I know what it is, don't say it—better not, far better not."

"Why not?" he cried. "What is it has changed you?"

"Who changed first?" she asked quietly, her eyes not on him, but looking straight away along the dull, grey line of road stretching before them.

He caught at her words.

"Is it that?" he cried eagerly; "is it that? Forget it, only remember that I loved you more than I knew, that I love you still. You cannot doubt it?"

She did not doubt it. She could not look upon his face, she could not hear his voice, and doubt it. But she only shook her head.

"Too late, too late!"

It was little more than a whisper, but he heard it.

"Too late," he repeated, "and you cared for me not so long ago? You loved me—do you deny it?"

He had caught her hand, and they stood facing one another, two solitary figures on the bleak bare highway.

"No, I do not deny it," she said quietly; "why should I attempt to do so? You knew it well enough, and you could leave me."

They were the first bitter words he had ever heard from her lips. Too late, indeed!

She stood fronting him, a little shade of pain, of pride, upon her face, but, as he knew, with not a throb in pulse or heart for him. But he could not give her up even then.

"Can you not forgive," he began hoarsely, "or is there someone else, someone——?"

A little pale flush had come to Agatha's cheek, a startled look to her eyes. There was the clatter of swift horse's hoofs upon the iron road; another moment, horse and rider, swifter and swifter yet at sight of them, were dashing wildly past; another, and in answer to the spur, the horse had swerved, and his rider, stunned and senseless, lay almost at their feet. It was the Dean's James, the man who at that moment had been in both their thoughts.

Then Guy Danby's punishment began. He saw the woman who no longer loved him, throw herself by his rival's side, forgetful of his very presence. He

saw the look upon her face that might have been for him; he saw her take the unconscious figure to her clasp and hold it there, pillowing the wounded head upon her lap, careless alike of whether he or all the world looked on, so only she might guard and shelter him.

Guy Danby had taken off his great-coat, and would have thrown it over her shoulders.

"No, no," she cried, when she found what he was doing; "here, here, on him," and covered the white, still figure as best she could.

Her companion went back to the middle of the road, and looked anxiously up and down.

"If only someone would come by," he said, returning to Agatha. "I cannot leave you here, and see, the snow is falling."

But Agatha heeded neither Guy Danby nor the falling snow, save that she strove to cover the prostrate form more closely. Only once she looked up at her companion.

"Is he dead, do you think?" she whispered with white, trembling lips.

"Only stunned, I think," he answered, letting fall the listless hand, and went back to his watch once more.

But Guy Danby's ordeal was nearly over. A sound of distant wheels that, growing nearer, presently brought a carriage close upon them. At sight of them the coachman drew up sharply, a familiar head was popped out of the window; another moment, and the Rectoress of St. Swithin's was standing by Agatha Wharton's side. Perhaps, on the whole, it could not have been anyone better.

Mrs. Tyerman gave one glance about her—a glance that took in all three, and the state of affairs as well as if she had been there from the beginning. Then she asked a question or two, felt the Major's pulse, and in three minutes from her first appearance on the scene had him safely in her carriage with Agatha sitting opposite, and the Captain on the box, under orders for Postleton, "and carefully mind, or I shall get out and drive myself."

CHAPTER VII.

CHRISTMAS EVE, but early morning, so early that day is only just stealing over the city, and the happier half of Postleton slumber yet. The air is sharp and still, and snow lies thick and white on everything and everywhere—over quiet fields; over small country towns and busy cities; over the but half-awakened city of Postleton

itself ; over the cathedral, grey and solemn in the winter's dawn, where in their niches the saints stand grim and white, sheeted like sinners at their penance ; thick and white about the quiet Close, where the stiff red houses stand like whited sepulchres, and where in the Deanery itself Agatha Wharton's eyes are just opening, and the world is beginning for her once more.

For all the merry Christmas-tide her heart is heavy, and the short winter's day drags wearily to its close. The Dean's James had taken farewell of Postleton, his broken head has been mended, and he is off to-day on sick-leave, and has hinted of India and exchange, so the Deanery scarcely looks to see him again. As dusk fell he should have been many a mile away, and yet who paced with restless steps the snow-covered flags of the cathedral-yard ?

Frank Wharton crossing it came upon the well-known figure. It was quite dark, but she recognised it at once, and even in her surprise, I think, what brought it there.

"Why, Uncle James," she cried, "I thought you were miles away !"

The Major gave a little guilty start as she touched his shoulder.

"So I am," he said—"supposed to be, that is."

"What are you here for, then ?" said Frank bluntly.

"Can't you guess ?" the Major asked quietly. "I have heard something, and I cannot go till I have seen her."

"If you mean Agatha, and I suppose you do, she is in there, and oh, Uncle James, she is very unhappy !"

In the cathedral, afternoon service was just concluding. Lights shone here and there through the stained windows. Presently the doors were thrown open, one of Handel's choruses came rolling from the organ. Then the little group of worshippers came quietly out.

The Dean's daughter was one of the last to leave. She stood still a moment, her face upturned to the starlit sky, then prepared to move away. As she did so, a dark figure came out of the shadows, a hand was laid upon her arm, a voice she knew spoke her name. It was not five minutes' walk from the cathedral to the Deanery, but to-night it took so much longer that before it was reached the Major had learned all he wanted to know, and India was worlds away. Instead was only the Deanery door standing hospitably open, with the Dean, who had just come up, holding out a welcoming hand. The

soft light from the lamp burning in the hall streamed out, and fell warmly on the three.

Then the door closed, and shut them, the lamp-light, and the warmth, safe within. It shut out the winter's night, the darkness, and the snow. It shut out the passers-by ; it shut out one who lingered there, and could not take himself away ; a man with a dark, despairing face, and wild passion at his heart ; shut him out for ever from what might have been his own.

As he turned away at last, the cathedral bells clanged out, and someone passing wished him "A Merry Christmas !"

TRAVELS IN THE EAST.

PART III.

"You ought to see the Smoke Holes !"

This was the exclamation wherewith I had so suddenly been startled by my guide, shortly after we had left our friend the one-eyed basket-maker, who, by a funny freak of memory, somehow had reminded me of the one-eyed Second Calender in the Arabian Nights. The dear Arabian Nights ! For how many pleasant days have I to thank those precious Nights ! What magical delights have been conjured by their spell ! Like orient pearls at random strung, these gems of Eastern fairy lore have been fastened on my memory, and in many a dark hour have flashed upon my brain. How I have pitied poor Aladdin when his palace disappeared, and with it his fair princess, whose long name Badroulbador no schoolboy dare pronounce ; and how I have rejoiced when she so pluckily had poisoned the magician, and Aladdin had regained possession of his lamp ! How I have envied Camaralzaman the love of his Badoura, and have enjoyed the ducking of his servant in the well ! How sorry I have felt for the young king of the Black Isles, who from the waist downwards was marble, and not man ! How I have read with breathless interest every detail of the battle fought between the Queen of Beauty and the Evil Genius, who, appearing as a lion, was halved neatly by a hair (transformed into a scythe), then was changed into a scorpion, a serpent, a pussy-cat, and a pomegranate-seed, and after escaping as a fish from the jaws of his pursuer, rose from the water all aflame, and was burned finally to bits ! How I have laughed at poor Alnaschar, the barber's fifth brother, when he kicked over his glass-ware, and awoke from his sweet day-dream of

prosperity and pomp! How I have longed to have a mount on the Enchanted Horse, and to go with Prince Firouz Schah, that boldest of all high-flyers, on a flight towards the moon! I remember, when I climbed a tree to peep into a pigeon's nest, I often pleased myself with thinking how young Sindbad the Sailor had discovered the roc's egg by a similar ascent; or how dear old Ali Baba, being similarly perched, heard the magical "Open Sesame" of the famous Forty Thieves. I believe I could still find, on the sea-shore nigh to Felixstowe, the precise spot where the fisherman, to my fancy, was at work when the Genius (the "Genie" in my old, ill-printed version) was escaping wrapped in smoke from the yellow copper vase; and I could readily show the place in the quaint old town of Harwich where Aladdin saw the princess coming from her bath. The dear Arabian Nights! As Talleyrand exclaimed, "Ah, what a sad old age you are preparing for yourself!" to a young man who protested that he cared not to learn whist; so would I cry out, "Ah, what lifelong pleasures of memory you may lose if you care not in your youth to read the dear Arabian Nights!"

But I have mounted on my hobby-horse, and am galloping away from the guidance of my guide, who had suddenly exclaimed to me:

"Now we are so near them, you ought to see the smoke-holes." The smoke-holes? Why yes, certainly. Since he thought it was my duty, I would surely see the smoke-holes. As a traveller, I was bound to see the strange sights of the country I was bent upon exploring. The smoke-holes? What on earth they were, I could not imagine. There was a magic in their name that whetted curiosity, and made me anxious to behold these marvels of the East.

As we trudged along, my fancy revelled in the smoke-holes. Were they geysers, or volcanoes, or deep caverns in the earth; fissures sulphurous and ghastly, vomiting huge volumes of vaporous obscurity, Smoke-holes like to these seemed suggested by my memories of Oriental fairy-tale and scenes described in travellers' books. But the reality fell short of the preconceived romance.

We found the smoke-holes simply chimneys, square-built of thick planks, about four feet in width, and a dozen or so in height. In each a fire of sawdust lay smouldering at bottom. while above hung

sprats or haddocks, regular in rows, and spitted upon sticks. A "machine" of fish, I learned, was a truck-load of two tons; and such were often bought and shared among the renters of the smoke-holes, whose trade it was to clean, and salt, and dry, and smoke the fish. In the shed which we had entered, a couple of men were busily employed in splitting haddocks at a most amazing pace; cleaning them and sorting them according to their sizes, and a little too, it seemed to me, according to their smell. Another man and a small boy were opening their gills, and stringing them on sticks, which they hung across the holes. Above the heads of the two splitters, in a cage six inches square, a pretty little linnet was warbling to the workers, who seemed to have small leisure to listen to his song.

In the yard next door, a man and boy were likewise hard at work, spitting sprats upon the sticks. This seemed a work more delicate and slower to accomplish, as they were smaller fish. They looked silvery and bright as they were taken from the salting tub. In the room through which we passed—and which seemed scullery, and kitchen, and dining-room, and workshop, and bed-chamber to boot—two women, brisk and buxom, with their sleeves tucked to their elbows, were employed in cleaning similar small fish. A cat lay snoozing by the fire, looking comfortably sleek, and presenting a rare contrast to the lean cats we had seen. She was doubtless fond of fish—pussies generally are—although I guessed her to be a new comer, for she must have had a glut of it in such a fishy place. However good her appetite, she must soon feel like the grocer's boy, who finds that sugar is too sweet for him after a week's work.

I remarked upon the number of what I mistook for mice-holes, in the flooring by the hearthstone, and the corners of the walls. I said I thought the cat must be neglectful of her duty, and was hardly worth her keep; she looked so sleek and sleepy, and the mice seemed so abundant. "Mices 'oles!" cried the woman, smiling at my ignorance. "Law, sir, they ain't mices 'oles, they're rats' 'oles, that's what they are. An' a plenty of 'em we has too, an' can't no ways keep 'em out, we can't. Fast as ever we blocks one 'ole, there they makes another bigger. They're too sharp for the cat to catch, and as for settin' o' traps, it ain't a mite of use. Bait 'em as you may, they won't never go anigh 'em. I s'pose as it's the huffle as temps 'em to flock in so.

Y'see, sir, after a goodish spell o' work, an' speshly cleanin' 'addocks, there's allys lots o' hoffle, and I fancy as the rats they likes it for their suppers. Bless you, when the light's out, and there's nobody to see 'em, 'cause they're 'mazin' shy is rats, they cuts out of their 'oles, and kicks up such a caper! One can't hardly sleep a' times, they're so a squealin', an' a squeakin', an' a kickin' up a shindy. Nuisance? Well yes, now you come to think of it, they are a slightish nuisance. I've often felt 'em on the bed, and 'ad to keep a stick anigh me 'andy for to knock 'em off it. More nor once or twice they've runned over acrost my face they have, and my 'usband says he've eered 'em a gnawrin' of his whiskies. Why yes, you may say that, sir. 'Tis well as they likes fish, or some fine night they'd be a nibblin' of our noses off."

A very little boy, with very little clothing on, was prattling to his mother, while he played about the room. He had no playmate to help him, nor had he any plaything, and he seemed playing a small game of hide-and-seek all by himself. His cheeks were plump and rosy—they were the first Eastern roses I had seen—and he looked certainly as though a fish diet agreed with him, as it did clearly with the cat. To vary the monotony of his playing all alone, I took him by the arms, and gave him the delight of some jumping in the air. He seemed mightily to relish this new form of entertainment; and, when I bade good-bye to him, he eyed me rather wistfully, much as a dog may eye his master when the dog desires to be taken for a walk. Chancing to look round when I was half-way down the street, I perceived my young playmate closely following at my heels, and he began to cry a little when his mother called him back. Well, thought I, as he left me, it is an easy thing to please a child who wants a game of play; and this little fellow can certainly have known but little pleasure in his life, when he finds so much enjoyment in a few jumps from the floor.

There are plenty of these smoke-holes to be met with in the East; and some few of their occupants appear now to be doing a fairly thriving trade, in comparison, at least, with other Eastern folk. In using the word "occupants," I write a little figuratively, for certainly the occupation of a smoke-hole would be anything but pleasant, and hardly even possible with the sawdust well alight. Some amount of capital must certainly be needful to enable a few traders to buy two tons of fish.

Indeed, I heard some whispers floating somewhere in the air, about the fortunes that were rumoured to be stored up in old stockings, or otherwise concealed. But I fancy there are middlemen with fingers in the pie, who help themselves, no doubt, to a good slice of its contents. The fish-markets are in a rather fishy state at present, and if some few among the smokers somehow manage in some years to put by something handsome, they do so by hard working at a rather ugly trade.

It must be understood, moreover, that many of these fish-curers are compelled to live by piecework, for they are far too poor to share in buying a "machine." As the work is intermittent, and comes by sudden fits and starts, it can hardly be regarded as a regular employment. Indeed, in a slack season there are many workless, and therefore wageless days; and at such times it is difficult, if not impossible, for any man to earn above a crown or so a week.

We had scarcely left the smoke-holes, and the scent of certain sprats was still fresh in our nostrils—though "fresh," perhaps, is hardly the right adjective to use—when we were suddenly enveloped in an odour far more savoury, whereof a few sniffs called to mind the fragrant smell of Irish stew. Quickly following our noses, we traced the perfume to a pint mug which was wrapped in an old handkerchief, and was being carried, by a poor newly-widowed woman, home to her sick child. The stew had clearly come from the Cottage Mission kitchen, for where else was procurable, at least in that poor neighbourhood, such richly smelling food? Now the mission stew was made, as I well knew, "to be consumed upon the premises," and was "supplied in their own jugs," or plates, to its consumers, who were allowed to eat their fill there, but to carry none away. This was the rule, and very sensible it was. My guide, however, now informed me that, in case of serious illness, the rule was not made absolute, and that children or their mothers were very properly allowed to take away a helping, if they had a little one lying sick at home. Of the good done by these dinners I had already taken count, and here was further proof of how they were esteemed. This poor woman had been walking for a mile or two, and waiting for an hour or so, to get a little wholesome food to carry home. Her little girl had hardly yet recovered from the whooping-cough, and was so weak, the doctor said, that she must have some meat. Perhaps

he might as well have prescribed a slice of peacock, or an ortolan or two, or a pineapple, or a peach. How was a poor widow to buy meat, she'd like to know, when she'd four children to feed, and with all her slaving only earned five bob a week? For despite of all the advertised advantages of machines, stitching shirts is still a starvation sort of work, and the wages to be gained are little higher than they were when the famous song about it was first put into print.

The next halt that we made was in the house of a poor woman, a widow like the last, and like her a hard worker, and one who very literally had hard work to live, while living by hard work. She was idle now, however, for she had sprained her back, and so her daughter, somehow, managed to do the work of both. And it wasn't easy neither, to make fifty beds a day, leastways forty-seven, if you'd like to speak exact, besides a cleaning of the rooms and a sweeping of the stairs a bit. An' then there was a washing every week of fifty, leastways of forty-seven sheets, and a score or so of towels—not little 'uns, neither, mind you, but regular big jacks. This was the hard labour to which she and her daughter had been condemned, perhaps for life, or at any rate for a living. A certain poor men's lodging-house just down there in the Causeway, was the place where this life punishment was being so worked out. Nine shillings a week was all the wages they could earn, and there were three mouths besides her own to fill.

Eighteenpence a week was the rent of the reception-room wherein we were received. We found it was, in fact, the rent of the whole house. Explored from ground to roof, the mansion held no other chamber; indeed, so tumbledown a house it was that hardly it held this. I could scarcely say with truth that we were in a downstairs room; for staircase there was none, and no attempt at a first floor. The walls seemed thin and tottering; and, if they did not let the air in, it entered pretty freely through the window and the door. There were big holes in the ceiling which served to admit daylight; big holes were visible likewise in the roof. Perhaps for a day-worker this might be esteemed a benefit, for the window was a small one, and the glass was much begrimed. A smell of something filthy, and likewise something smoky, seemed to hang about the place, and as there was no fire there, I confidently guessed it must be coming from outside.

"You're about right, sir," replied the poor widow. "It comes in through the window and down the chimney too, and mayhap through the roof a bit. You see, they're burning tins down in the yard yonder, and when the tins are extry foul, the smoke is apt to stink."

I peeped through the dim casement as well as I was able; and not far off I saw, all piled up in big heaps, a mountainous range of tins of differing formation, and varying antiquity, all mingled in a chaos that would certainly have puzzled a savant to have sketched. There were biscuit-tins, and flour-tins, and paraffin-tins, and colza-tins, and sardine-tins, and candle-tins, and tins of half-a-hundred shapes, and sorts, and sizes, whose past uses were quite past my present powers to explain. They were different in shape and different in substance, and in one thing only they seemed to be alike. All were old, and all were dirty, and most of them most foul, and all were there awaiting some strange purifying process, which seemed not very odorous, to sweeten their fouled substance into something useable, when seen in a re-melted and re-modelled state.

Half filling the small room was a bed with an old counterpane and some little substance under it. What that substance was, whether hay, or straw, or horsehair, I did not care to ask. It really seemed too little to be of much account. Nor did I care to guess how the mother and three children could all sleep in that one bed. Unless the latter were extremely small, they must have found it a tight fit.

A cat mewed at the door, and her mistress let her in. Puss wore a shabby coat of black and dirty white, which sadly needed to be washed. Nor was her personal appearance improved in other points. Her tail was out of curl, and her whiskers were unbrushed, and there were traces of a gutter tramp left sticking to her feet. She seemed indeed too hungry to attend much to her toilette, and I almost doubted if she were in her right mind. A cat of any common-sense would have surely left a place where she appeared so little cared for, and this specimen seemed indeed to be half starved.

"I foun' her in the street one night, nigh Bromley," said the widow. "It were a drizzlin' a bit, and there were a east wind blowin' enough to blow your 'at off, and she were a mewin' piteous she was. So I wrapped her in my apron and carried her straight 'ome with me. An' here she have

lived since, though it ain't much of a living. Well now, I dessay you may think I can't afford to keep a cat much. But there, she don't cost nothin'. I never buy no milk for her, nor meat neither, for that matter. An' you know, sir, she grows all her own clothing, and she ain't like my boy Billy, 'cause she don't wear out no boots. She catches of her mice somewheres; it ain't here, for we've got none. There's nothin' for 'em to eat, so they're wise to keep away from 'ere. Well yes, sir, she ain't much of a beauty, but I'd be sorry to lose her, that I would. You see, she's company like, she is, and is somethin' as one can talk to when one's feeling a bit lonesome, an' the children ain't at home. An' then they likes to play with her they does, and it ain't much one's got to play with, you know, sir, when one's poor."

I remarked upon the bad state of repair in which the house was kept, and suggested that the roof did not seem wholly water-tight. "Well no, sir, I can't say as it do," replied the widow, with something like the ghost of a dead smile on her wan face. "What with all them 'oles, and the plaster off the ceiling, we often wants an umbrella a'most to keep the rain off. Yes, I've spoken to the landlord, and he tells me as he'll see to it, And so peraps he may—leastways, if he live long enough. Oh yes, sir, he's well off enough. One of the pious ones he is, and goes to service regular. He looks sharpish for his rents, though, an' he don't give 'em away much; leastways, about here he don't. The Parish ought to know, you say? Law bless you, who's the Parish? You see, the 'ouse is tidy cheap, as 'ouses go, an' if I was to leave I mightn't find another easy. And there, it never ain't no good to pick a quarrel with your landlord. You gets the key o' the street, instead o' the front door, you does. The 'ouse ain't over water-tight, nor wind-tight neither, mind you; but it's better than none, an' one mustn't be too pertickler when one can't afford it."

With this philosophic aphorism to refresh me in my travels, I took my leave of the good widow, whom I mentally commended for the brave attempt she made to seem content with her hard lot. After making a few more halts upon my way, and traversing a mile or more of brick-work so monotonous, by thoroughfares so similar, that I wondered how my guide could find his way along them, we returned to Salmon Lane, where there was

business that awaited him. Among other news, Miss Napton, the kind lady-superintendent, reported a visit she had made the day before, which had very much distressed her. Calling just at nightfall on a family hard-by, she found the mother and her children anxiously expecting the home-coming of the father, who was a dock-labourer. He presently returned, looking sorely worn and haggard. "Look here," he cried half savagely, flinging his hat upon the floor; "I've been a tryin' hard all day, an' haven't earned a blessed farden. I been a standin' at the gates, an' a trampin' through the streets, till it's right down faint I am. And God A'mighty knows what we're to do to-morrow to keep ourselves from starving."

"Oh," exclaimed the kindly visitor, "if you had but heard the cry that those poor hungry children gave, when they found their father hadn't brought home food for them, I declare you must almost have cried yourself, as I did. But I hurried home at once and sent them a loaf of bread; and so, poor little things, they didn't sleep quite supperless."

I bade my guide good-bye, after hearing this sad story, and promising ere long to resume my Eastern travels. As I trudged home through the City, I entered the Cathedral. How lofty and how noble appeared its spacious dome, compared with all the mean and wretched rooms I had been visiting! The organ was just pealing forth the grandest of its tones, and the chubby, clean-cheeked, white-robed little choristers were sweetly carolling their evensong of thanksgiving and praise. Ah, thought I, my young friends, you may well sing "Oh, be joyful!" How many are your joys, and how few can be your griefs! Well catered for, well clad, and well cared for as you are, what a contrast are your lives to those of the poor children whose mothers starve at shirt-making, and who go supperless to bed when their fathers get no work!

GEORGIE: AN ARTIST'S LOVE.

A STORY IN SIX CHAPTERS. CHAPTER IV.

GEORGIE overslept herself the next morning.

Poor, unheroic little Georgie! she had lain so long awake; she had heard every hour strike until long past midnight, for it was not until then that Mr. Rentoul had come in, and that her fears on his behalf had been set at rest.

Might he not have fallen into some

ditch, and be lying there helpless, perhaps with a broken leg; might he not have been murdered by some footpad? She had read of such things in the newspapers. There was indeed scarcely any limit to the agony she piled up, nor was there any limit to her remorse.

She resolved to ask his forgiveness as soon as might be, she would make him forgive her; if there was no other way, she would tell him that she loved him, for—ah, she did—she did! She imagined to herself a most pathetic little tableau, or rather a series of tableaux. She saw a wounded man being tended by a wet-eyed, remorseful little nurse—a little nurse, who, in spite of total ignorance of the most elementary sick-room knowledge, and with a propensity to faint at the sight of a cut finger, should yet by her skilful and tender care save the wounded man's life and make whole his shattered limbs. Oh, she would have earned his forgiveness!

Had she possessed that most undesirable gift of fairy story-books, the gift of beholding loved objects when at a distance, she would have seen Mr. Rentoul among all the prosaic surroundings of the billiard-room at The Red Lion. It was true he looked somewhat cross, but the friend with whom he played attributed it to his repeated non-success, and who can say that he was not right?

Yes, had she been the possessor of that fairy gift, Georgie might have been spared many wakeful hours; but it would have been at the cost of some very romantic and tragic imaginings, and to render these impossible is always a deprivation to the young.

When Miss Rickards did make her tardy appearance, the sun was high in the heavens; the hands of the eight-day clock on the staircase showed it to be eleven.

Her tragic mood had departed, leaving in its place a certain feeling of excitement which was not unpleasant. It seemed to her that she could read forgiveness written in the blue sky, could feel it in every ray of warm sunshine.

She lingered a little on her way downstairs; might he not be in wait for her? Must he not be at least as eager as she herself for reconciliation? But there was no sign of his presence, and she entered the sitting-room just a little disappointed.

Breakfast was still on the table, the teapot was down in the fender keeping hot for her. Mrs. Thompson looked up from a letter she was writing, to tell her to ring

for anything she wanted. Myra, who was touching up a sketch at the window, made no sign whatsoever.

The silence was very uncomfortable to Georgie; by degrees it became unbearably so. She addressed herself to Myra:

"How are you?" she said. "Is your headache quite gone?"

"Quite, thank you; and you, after your long walk?"

Myra looked keenly at Georgie as she put this last question, and had the pleasure of seeing the girl become a rich crimson under her gaze.

"I don't think you should stay out so late," said Mrs. Thompson, looking up from her letter-writing; "we did not even know where you were going. It is not quite the thing, Georgie dear."

"I am sorry," murmured Georgie; "but I was not alone—I met Mr. Rentoul."

"That scarcely improves matters," remarked Mrs. Thompson; "however, it cannot happen again."

She was nervous, and a little perplexed, and so did not look up from her blotting-book. If only Myra were not there!

But Myra was there, and it was she who, with eyes fixed on the uncomprehending Georgie, proceeded to enlighten her.

"Mr. Rentoul has gone," she said; "he came to say good-bye, before you were up. I believe it is some news he received this morning, that has obliged him to leave."

Georgie's expressive face was a study, and Myra studied it, until Georgie, driven to desperation, suddenly went up to her:

"It is all your fault," she cried excitedly. "I was rude; but it is your fault. Why could you not leave me alone? And now he has gone; I have driven him away."

On the point of tears, Miss Rickards rushed from the room.

Mrs. Thompson stopped writing, and looked at her daughter with a sort of "I told you so" expression in her eyes.

"How childish she is!" returned Myra in answer to the look; "excitable and unreasonable. I don't believe Mr. Rentoul has the smallest intention of asking her to be his wife; but, supposing he has, he has not gone to the Antipodes. London is large, certainly, but it will not be impossible for him to come and see us if he feels so inclined; however, I do not think he will feel inclined, he is just the sort of man to run away from a girl who flings herself at his head."

After this speech the oracle was silent,

and sat somewhat gloomily staring out into the sunshine. She did not like that reproach of Georgie's. Had she been mistaken all along? Had her words of warning and advice to Georgie come between two loving souls?

She was obliged to console herself with the thought that it was not irremediable. She would write a little note to Mr. Rentoul, reminding him that they were at home on Sundays, as soon as ever she was in town.

Ten days after Mr. Rentoul's sudden departure, the three ladies returned to London. Myra had carefully observed Miss Rickards during those ten days, and having discovered no loss of appetite, nor any other fatal sign of the "worm being in the bud," was easier in her mind. Nevertheless, one of her first acts was to write a little note to the artist asking him not to forget his promise to come and see them. She showed the letter to Georgie, who blushed very much, but made no comment. Three days later there came a letter from Mr. Rentoul.

"DEAR MISS THOMPSON,—I regret very much that I am unable to call upon you before leaving England. I start for Rome to-night, where I shall remain some little time; after that my movements will be somewhat erratic. My present intention is to spend a couple of years abroad. Hoping at some future time to renew our very pleasant acquaintance, and with kind regards to your mother and Miss Rickards, I remain, dear Miss Thompson, very sincerely yours,
PAUL RENTOUL."

Myra handed the letter to Georgie in silence. She might have said much, with this proof of her own wisdom and Georgie's folly staring them in the face, but she really felt sorry for the little thing. She looked away from the eager flushed face and questioning eyes; she almost made up her mind to leave the room, she did not want to see Georgie cry. As it turned out she need not have feared any display of emotion. Georgie was no longer quite the childish Georgie of former days. She gave the letter back to Myra without a word and with a calmness worthy of Miss Thompson herself. If later, when alone in her room, she did let herself cry a little, let it be remembered that that letter meant to her a sudden crashing of hopes that had been very strong and sweet.

The winter went by uneventfully; the weather even gave no surprises or any but the poorest excuse for talking about it, so conventional was it in its behaviour. March was almost too orthodox, it arrived in so painfully lion-like a way, with such cutting north-east winds and such clouds of dust. Mrs. Thompson and Georgie both succumbed; they remained swathed in fleecy woollen shawls, and rang the changes in beef-tea, gruel, and hot-spiced wine.

Miss Thompson alone continued to face those penetrating blasts. She was very busy just then competing for a prize for design at South Kensington; besides, she agreed with Kingsley, and declared with him that a genuine nor'-easter is beneficial both to mind and body.

As March proceeded to depart, clothed in the meekness of the very weakest of lambs, Mrs. Thompson became, to quote her own words, herself again; it was the younger invalid who was apparently unable to shake off her cold. The doctor prescribed change of air. But Myra treated both doctor and patient to a little wholesome scorn, and was entirely opposed to leaving town at that particular time on account of her work. However, it so came to pass that Miss Rickards obtained change of air in spite of Myra's scorn. A letter came from Mrs. Sparkes. She was for the second time a widow, and had fixed upon Brighton as the one spot possessing all the atmospheric and social qualities necessary to her grief-stricken condition. She went on to beg for the immediate company of her dear little Georgie.

It was towards the end of April that Georgie left London; bright sunshine and soft, warm showers had touched the trees with that fresh, tender green that lasts so short a time with us.

Sweet spring flowers were being hawked about the streets, winter's sombre wraps had been discarded; everyone was looking gay and happy, and refused to listen to those wiseacres who shook their heads at the blue sky, declaring that such weather in April would be dearly bought.

Georgie, driving to the station with Mrs. Thompson, a little pale, perhaps, from long confinement to the house, and with her brightness subdued, perhaps for the same reason, felt her energies awaken in the new life of the year.

That same spring that took Georgie to

Brighton brought with it changes to the Thompson household. Myra gained the second prize for her design, a sum of fifty pounds.

"Let us spend the money in Paris, mother," she said.

And Mrs. Thompson dutifully replied:

"Yes, if you like, dear."

Had Myra proposed spending the money in a trip to the south of Africa, or to the North Pole, the answer would have been the same.

Mrs. Thompson in her far-off better days had spent a couple of weeks in the world's capital of pleasure, and had vague, delightful recollections of crowded tables d'hôte, theatres, and shopping; but to Myra it was all new and full of charm. The Louvre, the Luxembourg, the churches, she did them all, note-book in hand; for the most part unconscious of the admiration she excited in the breasts of sundry little curly-hatted Frenchmen, who, never mistaking her nationality for a single moment, paid a tribute to our beauty and to our originality at one and the same time.

One day, Miss Thompson was at the Louvre, standing with her note-book before the well-known "Cruche Cassée," when she heard a step approach, and then pause close behind her, a new reflection was visible in the polished floor, a voice she knew sounded in her ear:

"Miss Thompson! this is a very unexpected pleasure!"

She turned quickly, blushed one of her rare, vivid blushes, and shook hands with Mr. Rentoul.

"You are alone?" he said, casting an enquiring glance round the room, his eye resting on a slight girlish figure, unmistakably English, whose back was turned to them; he was near-sighted, it was possible he might have fancied that Mrs. Thompson was the wearer of that well-fitting Newmarket and velvet toque.

"Yes. Mamma is not strong enough to do much sight-seeing, and we have no friends in Paris."

They went round the world-renowned gallery together, he giving her his artist's appreciation on all that struck them. Myra found it very pleasant; they were both artists, both with an artist's love of the beautiful; the woman a little spoilt, perhaps, by conceit and the affectation of the æsthetic school; but with him she was always at her best. Many—nay, most people who knew her, as well as friends and acquaintances do usually know one

another—would scarcely have recognised this appreciative, almost diffident woman for the clear-spoken, decisive Miss Thompson of their acquaintance.

"You and Mrs. Thompson must do me the honour of coming to see some of my work," he said at parting—he had already told her he had taken a studio for a few months—and Myra promised.

Mrs. Thompson was much elated on hearing of Mr. Rentoul's residence in Paris. It had been indeed a happy idea of Myra's to come. Long ago, in her young days, before her early education had been corrected, and her thoughts generally amended by her daughter, she would have felt grateful to Providence—now she felt grateful to Myra instead, and perhaps this friendly feeling was extended also to Mr. Rentoul. Be that as it might, she was always very cordial and charming to him when he visited them, as he often did.

She was delighted to visit his studio, and was rapturous over his pictures; she was equally enchanted to chaperon Myra to the theatre on every occasion that Mr. Rentoul took places.

Lyme Regis, Georgie, and her disappointment of a few months back, faded away in the present bright light of victory, for surely victory had come at last!

It came one night at the Français. The second act was over. Mrs. Thompson remained sitting in the box; Mr. Rentoul and Myra walked about in the gallery outside. They had been discussing the play.

"It is almost too well done," he said. "What born actresses women are! How is a man to know when a woman really cares about him? how can he be sure she is not merely acting a part?"

"I don't agree with you," she answered shortly. "When a woman really loves, I believe her to be incapable of acting—it is sometimes almost more than she can do——" But here Myra stopped abruptly, and became scarlet.

Mr. Rentoul looked interested.

"Almost more than she can do," he repeated gently.

Just at that moment the recall-bell was rung—the long passages were quickly deserted—they were alone.

Myra never completed her unfinished sentence, but there was no need, he could not help understanding, and he was too chivalrous or too weak to pretend that he did not.

Ten minutes later two people noiselessly entered a box on the second tier. The

house was breathless, and in that almost petrified condition characteristic of the Français audiences. No orchestra, no applause; the very laughter was hushed. This late entry, tip-toed and silent as it was, drew many deprecating glances towards their box. Mrs. Thompson turned and looked at them as well, but her glance was not deprecatory, it was triumphant. She knew with the unerring instinct of a woman and of a mother that the deed was accomplished.

Myra's engagement improved her in many ways. She modified her somewhat eccentric taste in dress, and studied the arrangement of her hair. Her very sarcasm was softened, and merged into an attractive sparkliness; while towards her betrothed her humility continued to be very charming. Mrs. Thompson told herself over and over again that even if he did not love Myra as yet, that love must come. The good lady had watched him so narrowly on a former occasion, that the absence of certain little exterior signs was the cause of no small anxiety to her.

Myra had no such reminiscences, was exercised by no such doubts. Those little nothings—an inflection of voice, a passing expression, missed by her mother, were unknown to her. She never doubted his love for her for one moment.

And he? Had he forgotten already his love of four months ago? Alas! sometimes he sadly thought that such entire forgetfulness as alone could bring him peace would never come. But he was quite convinced of his mistake; she did not love him, he was too old, too grave, too commonplace, to attract so lovely and brilliant a little thing. He pictured to himself the sort of man she would marry: young, and handsome, and rich—very rich; he could not fancy Georgie otherwise than surrounded with the luxuries of life, its velvets and its silks.

And so with the sweetest dream that his life could hold put on one side for ever, what could he do better on discovering poor Myra's secret, than stoop and gather up the treasure so generously laid at his feet? Besides, he had always admired Miss Thompson; over and above her being an artist like himself, many points in her character were congenial to him—her frank-

ness, her entire absence of self-consciousness; her very wrong-headed radicalism amused and interested him. His affection for her had much of the camaraderie and calm confidence that exists between two men friends; it had nothing of the blindness and credulity of love, none of its doubts, or fears, or mad jealousies—none of its intoxication.

He never spoke to Myra of Miss Rickards, but once happening to find himself alone with Mrs. Thompson, he had in a casual sort of way mentioned her name. It so chanced that that morning's post had brought a long letter from Mrs. Sparkes, in which she had dwelt much on the gaiety of Brighton.

"Dear Georgie is so much admired," she wrote; "she goes out a great deal with my old friend, Mrs. Cooper; it is indeed fortunate she has secured such a chaperon."

Mrs. Thompson had somewhat enlarged upon this passage; to hear her, one might easily have imagined Georgie on the point of being engaged to six or seven men at the same time.

"I am glad she is having so much amusement," was all that Mr. Rentoul had felt called upon to say; however, he left the Thompsons' pretty rooms more than ever convinced of Georgie's unsuitability to him as a wife.

The soft spring days went by; Paris was still very full, although much of its fashion had departed to repose itself in country châteaux, preparatory to shining forth with renewed splendour at Trouville and Dieppe.

The marriage was arranged to take place in the autumn, and the winter following the artist couple were to pass in Rome.

Myra was almost afraid of her own happiness; she found her mother's frequent ebullitions of joy a little irritating. The elder lady was already busy with the trousseau, and she had enough to do, for Myra left it entirely to her taste, only urging on her mother the expediency of getting everything as cheap as possible.

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PRICE TWOPENCE

A DRAWN GAME.

BY BASIL.

AUTHOR OF "LOVE THE DEBT," ETC.

CHAPTER XXIV. A BOLT OUT OF THE BLUE.

ARCHIE, as he was retiring for an hour's rest, kissed Mrs. John, with an even deeper tenderness than usual, and said only :

"Mother, I shall say nothing. Words are nothing—at least my words!" with a bitter self-scorn. His life was to speak, and he meant it and would make it speak. He had hitherto wasted everything, not merely money, but opportunities and faculties, now he would retrieve them so far as they could be retrieved—not far. Time is like the Cumæan Sibyl; she comes to us in childhood and offers us everything she has to sell, all her nine books. If we think the cost too great and let the chance pass, in manhood there are but six, and in middle-age but three, offered us at the cost at which in childhood we could have acquired all the nine. But still less retrievable than what we might have done are the things we have done.

'Tis law as steadfast as the throne of Zeus
Our days are heritors of days gone by.

Archie, as we shall see, had given life in the past to a haunting Frankenstein monster, easier to create than to destroy.

After Archie had left her, Mrs. John stole into Ida's room to make sure that she slept—as she did soundly. Then duty bound her to tell the news to the Rev. John. As the Rev. John was not sound asleep, or more asleep than he usually was in his waking moments, Mrs. John proceeded to vex his dull ear with the wondrous tale. Expecting him to take it placidly, after his manner, she was quite startled by the extraordinary effect it had

upon him. He absolutely sat up in bed and exclaimed :

"I couldn't have thought Archie would have been such a fool!"

"Such a fool?"

"To take Ida, too!"

"But why not, John?" more and more amazed.

"Why not? It's penal servitude, Mary."

This view of marriage, and of a marriage with Ida, sounded startling from those mild lips. Mrs. John, however, knew now that he must have pieced what bits of the story he had heard into some portentous shape.

"What's penal servitude, John?"

"Killing those people. It's nothing less than manslaughter."

"But what had Archie and Ida to do with it?"

"Why, you say they drove the engine——"

"They drove the engine that brought back the wounded after the accident, but they were themselves in the train when it happened."

Then Mrs. John retold the story from beginning to end, assuring herself of the Rev. John's attention at the points of most importance by questioning him upon them, or making him repeat them.

The Rev. John, having by this means been brought to a fairly adequate understanding of the business, relapsed into placidity, and remarked merely that, "it accounted for Ida's coming at that hour." Half-past four a.m. was certainly an odd hour for a morning call, but the Rev. John was probably less struck by its being Ida, than by its not being a christening, which called him up in that singular way and hour.

Then Mrs. John set to to light a fire to make herself some tea, as a help to clear and brace her mind to meet the

emergency. The first thing to contrive was the keeping of Ida as long as possible. To this end Mrs. John composed and wrote out a telegram to have ready to send to Mrs. Tuck the moment the office opened :

"Miss Luard arrived all right, but tired out and in need of a week's rest. Shall write to-night."

Then, as she must be doing something, she proceeded forthwith to the writing of the letter, which, however, she would take care not to send till the last post. In it she said coolly, and as a mere matter of course, that she thought Ida might recover the shock, fatigue, and excitement she had undergone in a few days. Indeed, she (Mrs. John) hoped to be able to send her back to The Keep, some time next week. This letter being off her mind, Mrs. John stole again into Ida's room under the pretence of reassuring herself that she still slept, but really to hang over and admire her, as a mother over her first-born. Truly no one—not Archie even—admired Ida so much as Mrs. John. She was so generous a woman that she would have unaffectedly admired what was admirable even in a rival—if a division of the Rev. John's attentions is conceivable. As for Ida, Mrs. John admired her almost with a lover's intensity, and now felt a kind of mother's pride in her beauty as something soon to belong to herself. She sat long by her bed admiring her and pitying her; thinking only of her and for her, without seeing what, indeed, was not to be seen—a clear way out of her difficulties.

At last the stir of the servants in the house drew her away to caution them against disturbing the sleeper, and to send the telegram by one of them into Leeds, where the office opened earlier than in Edgburn.

She need not, however, have been in such haste, as Mrs. Tuck did not come down to breakfast that morning till one o'clock. She read the telegram a little earlier, and sent an answer a little later. Mrs. John tore open the envelope with trembling fingers, but had no sooner read the contents than she rushed effusively at Ida, and kissed her in a transport of surprise, relief, and delight. And, indeed, the answer was the very opposite to her certain foreboding of it; for it was a grateful acknowledgment of Mrs. Pybus's kind offer of a week's hospitality to Ida. What could this mean? It was impossible to imagine any explanation of an answer so

utterly unexpected. The truth was Mr. Tuck was perfectly furious at the discovery which couldn't be kept from him, that the young lady who was (as he considered it) pilloried in every newspaper in the three kingdoms as having acted as stoker (to Archie of all people!) was no other than Ida. That a relative of his should so disgrace herself, and that the disgrace should be known in every pothouse in Kingsford and in the kingdom, was really terrible to him. If, then, Ida had returned to The Keep at once, Mr. Tuck would most certainly have so insulted her in his frenzy that she would have been driven back to take refuge for good with Mrs. John. Therefore Mrs. Tuck, in her perplexity, could not, on the spur of the moment, think of any better escape from the difficulty, than to let Ida stay where she was, till the storm had somewhat subsided. Hence her telegram.

Ida accepted its welcome permission as she had accepted Archie, and as we accept delightful impossibilities in a dream, with a disquieting misgiving that it is a dream from which any moment we may be waked to a wretched reality. As for Archie, being a sanguine youth, he persuaded himself, and almost persuaded Mrs. John, that something terrible had turned up against Captain Brabazon—possibly a low marriage—which had upset all Mrs. Tuck's plans for him.

Anyhow, here was an entire week of entire happiness before Archie—absolute happiness to him; to Ida not unalloyed. The dawn of love, like the sunrise, transfigures all that before was dark, and dull, and grey, and cold. The sun rises and transmutes in a moment the leaden lake into silver, and the leaden clouds into gold, the grey mist into all the riches of the rainbow, and the carbon blackness of the night dew into the diamonds of the dawn. So the dawn of love transfigured in most moods and moments to Ida all that it shone upon; and what yesterday was weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable, a sterile promontory, a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours, to-day is fresh and brilliant, a goodly frame, a most excellent canopy, a majestical roof fretted with golden fire.

Yes, Ida had crossed such a fairy bridge as Tieck describes in his charming story of The Elves, and what but now seemed a weary waste, blossomed in a moment into a glorious garden; while Love, like Zerina, scattered from her golden box the glittering

dust which strewed her path with all the flowers of Paradise.

Yet, in spite of love, in spite of Archie's perpetual presence, and in spite of the persuasive pleading of Mrs. John, Ida had her moments, her hours, of poignant remorse. How could she help it? She was the last girl in the world to be easily persuaded into the belief that she was not behaving abominably both to Dick and to Mrs. Tuck. So she was. But, as Mrs. John pointed out again and again, this was not really the question. The question was, whether she would not be behaving more abominably to both, if she married Dick while loving Archie. Mrs. John would say :

"My dear, you're in a scrape, I admit, and you've to get out of it in the best way you can. The only thing to consider is, which is the best way. If you think it the best way to make every one wretched all round, I've nothing more to say. You may be behaving badly to Captain Brabazon by breaking off your engagement, but will you be behaving better to him by keeping to it, while you don't care for him and do care for someone else? You think it wrong to break your plighted word to marry him? But there's your solemn vow to love him, Ida, to be made to him at the altar, and to be made with the certainty that you can't keep it. Will it mend matters, dear, to break an oath in order to keep a promise, and to make every one who loves you wretched for life in order to spare one man who does not love you a month's mortification? You know, you told me you didn't think it would break his heart to lose you."

"No; I don't think it would, but I owe him so much, Mrs. Pybus; and there's Mrs. Tuck, to whom I owe everything; she has set her heart upon it."

"Mrs. Tuck didn't know you loved another, Ida."

"And my promise," continued Ida, following her own train of thought.

"My dear, you're as provoking as John," who was present, and looked up here at Mrs. John with an expression of perplexity and mild remonstrance. "You're as provoking as John. You've not been listening to a single word I said."

"Indeed I have, Mrs. Pybus. You said it was better to break a promise made to him, than a solemn vow made before the altar," speaking with exceeding reverence.

"Just so, my dear Ida. I don't want you to consider in this matter what is pleasant or unpleasant, but what is right or wrong.

There's no doubt that if you marry Captain Brabazon, you'll make every one unhappy, and himself most of all. But that has nothing to do with it. The question is, is it right to marry one man while you love another? You make him wretched, and Archie wretched, and yourself wretched, for what? To do what is right? There is nothing you can do which is less right."

After a moment's silence, Ida said, "It's so pleasant to think it," in a tone which suggested that what was pleasant to think was plausible and to be suspected.

"My dear, what is pleasant isn't always wrong. Besides, you'll have plenty of unpleasantness, if that is all you need to persuade you. Mrs. Tuck will make it unpleasant for you, and so will Mr. Tuck. For, Ida dear," in a lowered tone of condolence, "I think you are giving up all your prospects for Archie. Mr. Tuck will never forgive you for marrying him."

"I shall be sorry for Archie's sake, Mrs. Pybus;" and then, with a sudden hope in her tone, "He will make Captain Brabazon his heir instead?" interrogatively.

"Mrs. Tuck will, I have no doubt," reading Ida's mental relief in the thought that Dick would be compensated, and consoled also, in this substantial way for the injury done to his bruised heart.

By such arguments Ida was brought to see that it was less wrong to break off than to keep to her engagement with Dick, but of course she was not thereby relieved of her remorse. She felt it bitterly in the intervals of the happiness of this week, and would even have expressed it forthwith in a letter to Mrs. Tuck, at the certain cost of an immediate recall to The Keep, if Archie had permitted her. It was not in human nature for him to permit her.

To him it was a week of delirious happiness—of more than a lover's happiness, for he felt himself a new man as well as in a new world. His old self was exorcised, and Ida would henceforth be the guiding and guardian angel of his life. Being a sanguine young man, he discounted the future, and felt now as though he was all that he meant to be. He never wearied of telling Ida what he would be, and what he would do, in the strength of the inspiration of her love, nor how he abhorred and abjured the selfishness to which Mrs. John had been a meek martyr for so many years.

"You must have changed since you were a boy, Archie. You never seemed to me then to be thinking of yourself, but always of me."

"Because you were then myself—a dearer self, Ida. Heavens! how I loved you!"

"Loved!" in a tone of playful reproach, which Archie silenced first with voiceless lips, and then by going through all the tenses of that delicious verb, as though the old time had come back, and he was conjugating it again at school:

"Loved you always, and will always love you—always, always, dearest."

"I hope the 'always' in the future, Archie, means more than the 'always' in the past."

"It couldn't mean more. I've loved you, dearest—you only, and always, ever since I was a boy."

"On my last visit? When we met at Bolton?"

"Yes, Ida, on your last visit and at our last meeting. I loved you then, as I love you now, only without hope. You seemed so proud and distant, and I was too proud not to be distant also. It was 'the desire of the moth for the star,' dearest; but now——"

Archie filled up this break with all the dumb eloquence of love, and then assured her again and again that he had loved her, and her alone, all these years. The assurance was not as true as Archie thought it, but to Ida his words seemed truth itself, for they gave a very echo to the seat where love was throned in her own heart.

To this point, of his constancy to Ida through discouragement, of his heart being

True as the dial to the sun,
Although it be not shined upon,

Archie returned again and again, for his own reassurance, perhaps, as much as for hers. For though his love for Ida had never gone altogether out into darkness all these years, yet it had waxed and waned, and been occulted by an earthier passion more than once.

But Ida needed not these repeated protestations of constancy. Had not she misjudged Archie's reserve? He might well, therefore, have misjudged hers. Had not she through all these years been constant through discouragement to him, and might not he, therefore, be credited with an equal constancy? She did not need, then, these protestations, though of course she could not hear them too often.

Ah, those days of early love! Those few drops of the water of heaven which Eve, like Hagar, was allowed to take with her for her children into the wilderness!

Those moments which alone realise, and more than realise, all the hopes of youth and all the memories of age! To us, as to Judas in the legend of St. Brandan, an angel comes once to quench our restless thirst from the very springs of heaven. From these springs Archie and Ida were drinking now great draughts, as though they would never know thirst more.

Ida, sitting with him under the lengthening shadow of the great horse-chestnut in the garden, forgot her trouble and her remorse, and Mrs. Tuck and Dick, and the world and life, and time, and everything,

Annihilating all that's made
To a green thought in a green shade.

And Archie, with an idolatrous worship, found heaven where she was.

At the end of the week, and the day before Ida was to return to The Keep, Archie had to give evidence at the enquiry into the railway accident held at Woolstenholme, and Ida was fain to content herself with hearing Mrs. John speak of him.

This the little woman did all the day through with as much impartiality as could be expected from her, speaking on such a subject to such a listener. So the day was got through, not heavily, and evening came, and the train by which Archie was expected. Then they heard him, as they thought, at the door, Ida with a happy blush and quick-beating heart, and Mrs. John with an exclamation and an arch look of congratulation at Ida.

But it was not Archie.

"Please, ma'am, there's a Mrs. Bompas wants to see you."

"Mrs. Bompas?"

"Yes, 'em. She asked first for Mr. Archie, and then for the master, and then for you."

"Mrs. Bompas? Is she a lady, Ellen?"

"Her dress is, ma'am; but I showed her into the study" (where she wouldn't have shown her if she had thought the lady went deeper than the dress).

"You had better show her in here, Ellen."

"Yes, ma'am."

Mrs. Bompas was shown in accordingly—a very stout woman, dressed in widow's weeds, and in the deepest black, but making even black look vulgar. Her manner, even when she was sober, which she hardly was now, was more than conciliatory—cringing and servile: a manner which usually slips into insolence on very short notice. Excessive protestations of

respect are worth as little as any other excessive protestations ; while, on the other hand, self-respect and respect for others are so far from being incompatible that they go generally together.

Anyhow, Mrs. Bompas had the command of but two equally offensive manners—the servile and the insolent. She was always either “over-violent or over-civil.” Now she was over-civil. She apologised abjectly for the intrusion, for the hour of the intrusion, due to her having missed a train, and lastly and most deeply for the cause of the intrusion. But what was its cause ? It was not easy to discover. As far as Mrs. John could disentangle it out of a bewildering maze of excuses and apologies, it was that Mrs. Bompas had the singular misfortune to be a mother. But had she, as she asserted, travelled seventy-five miles to ask the sympathy of a stranger for this extraordinary trouble ? Really Mrs. John began to fear that the woman was mad, so incoherent and inconsequent was her appeal. If she was insane there was all the more reason to be conciliatory and soothing, until the Rev. John or Archie came home to the rescue. Therefore Mrs. John, after exchanging a look of perplexity with Ida, thought it safest to say, “I’m sure I’m very sorry for you, Mrs. Bompas.”

“I’m sure you are—I knew you would be, Mrs. Guard.” She took Mrs. John for Archie’s own mother. “I knew you would be, Mrs. Guard. When I saw your face I felt as if a straw would knock me down. It’s my own boy’s face, I thought, his very face.” Here Mrs. Bompas had to hide her feelings in her pocket-handkerchief.

“Have you lost him ?” asked Mrs. John, now with real sympathy, thinking this bereavement had unseated her reason.

“I thought I had,” rejoined Mrs. Bompas briskly, with a sudden rebound from the prostration of grief. “I thought I had till I saw his name and address in the newspaper. My heroic boy ! It was so like him. I said to Anastasia it was so like him. But, poor child, she could only cry, ‘Take me to him, ma, take me to him.’ ‘No, no, Anastasia,’ I said, ‘it wouldn’t be proper. He shall come to you, but you cannot go to him.’”

Here Mrs. Bompas had again recourse to her pocket-handkerchief, in part probably from the funereal association awakened by these pathetic words. Conquering her emotion by a great effort, she resumed :

“I thought to wean her from him. I

hurried her away from Cambridge, leaving no address or trace for him to follow and find us out by, in the hope to wean her from him. But no ; it was no use ; it had gone too deep. She withered, Mrs. Guard ; I saw her wither. I was her mother, these are a mother’s tears,” holding out her handkerchief as though to assure Mrs. John that the tears she had put into that bottle were of this priceless brand. Then Mrs. Bompas irrelevantly relapsed into profuse apologies for being a mother, for being a widow, for being poor, for being presumptuous, for having a pretty daughter, for [having a warm heart, and for having a stationer’s shop. To these apologies Mrs. John listened with all the amiability of fear, for now her only doubt of Mrs. Bompas being mad lay in the hope that she was tipsy ; and, indeed, that good lady was not quite sober—it was not her custom to be at this hour. In fact, it was by staying too long in the refreshment-room at Holcroft Junction that she missed an earlier train, and through missing the train and having three hours to wait for the next, she was exposed again during that trying interval to the irresistible temptations of the refreshment-room.

Emboldened by Mrs. John’s exceeding friendliness, Mrs. Bompas took a higher flight, and proceeded to find a close relationship between herself and Archie’s mother. Being both mothers of the one boy, she seemed to come to the conclusion that they must be twins, and, indeed, “times and times Archie said to me I was as like his mother as two peas.”

“Archie !” echoed Mrs. John involuntarily, while a horrible clue to Mrs. Bompas’s maundering suggested itself to her. Women, even the best of women, are quick to suspect a love-intrigue. It is always the first explanation of any mystery which occurs to them.

“Archie ! Do you mean Mr. Guard ?”

But Mrs. John’s stress on the “Mr.” was nothing to that which Mrs. Bompas put upon it in her retort.

“Mr. Guard ! I’m sure I humbly ask your pardon,” with sudden offence and offensiveness in her manner. “Mis—ter Guard ! Oh, indeed ! Thank you, ma’am, for the correction,” rising to curtsy, and at the same time to fumble in her pocket, from which she drew at last a packet of letters, tied neatly with a black silk ribbon.

Having untied the ribbon with trembling fingers she took out one of the letters.

“Do you think, ma’am, I’d allow any

Mr. Guard to write in that way to my daughter?" with a sudden transition to stateliness, marred somewhat by a hiccough.

Mrs. John took the letter with a heart-sick certainty that Archie was either engaged to, or in a still worse way entangled with this creature's daughter.

"DEAREST NESTY,—Couldn't come, as I've sprained my ankle. Send locket by the Frenchy. Mind you wear it where you promised, darling. How I envy it! It will touch your hand, your lips, your neck, be with you always night and day. I believe you wanted a lock of my hair, you little witch, only to torture me while I'm away from you. But I shall pine and consume away without that, little one, unless you come to nurse me. Fancy Mumps as a nurse! He's the only one I have. You might come in your Jessica suit, and pass porters and proctors, and even old 'Black-and-Tan.' Anyhow you must write, and write at once, and write at length, not a scrap, remember, only to madden my thirst, but a long, long draught of love that will last me till I see you, and drink from the fountain-head. My own darling! Ever, ever, ever yours, ARCHIE."

Ida, white and trembling, with terror in her wide eyes, watched Mrs. John while she read this pretty production; the first part standing, then towards the end sitting suddenly down, with face now flushed, now pale, and hands that could not keep the paper steady. No woman in the world could be more shocked than Mrs. John by such a letter, and the connection it seemed to suggest; and poor Ida read her doom in the misery of Mrs. John's face as she folded up the note. Just as she was folding it Archie burst joyously in.

"Well, mother, that business——"

He took it all in in a moment, at sight of Mrs. Bompas with the packet of letters in her hand. He glanced over at Ida, and then sat down on the nearest seat, the picture of remorse and despair. It needed hardly this, and only this to convince Mrs. John of his disgraceful connection with, and Ida of his degrading engagement to, the daughter of this drunkard.

IN A GOVERNMENT OFFICE.

THE Government clerk has been for many years the recognised butt of small wits. He is said to be like the Trafalgar fountains—to play from ten till four

(which the fountains do not, by the way). He is represented as refusing to read the paper on his journey to town in the morning, because, if he does, he will be stranded for occupation when he reaches the office, and so forth. Red-tapeism is supposed to be rampant still throughout the service, and the Circumlocution Office even to this day a not very exaggerated picture of what a Government office really is.

However true it may have been a generation ago, there is no doubt things have altered greatly for the better now. Jobbery is not common, at all events. Sir Arthur Helps, who had a wide experience, declared that he had never met with a case. His good fortune is not that of everyone; there is no doubt that jobs are occasionally perpetrated, but they are the exception, not the rule. The growth of a healthy feeling in matters of this sort, combined with a wholesome fear of exposure, make the possibility of jobbery every day more difficult.

Different offices differ so widely in their constitution and work, that it is difficult to describe life in one without its appearing a false picture to those conversant with the details of some other. For the purposes of this paper it will be wisest to take an imaginary office, describing, however, nothing that does not exist in some office or other, and endeavouring to picture the kind of life that with more or less modification is passed in all.

Suppose, then, that the Government office in question is one charged with the supervision of all public places of amusement throughout England, except the metropolis. It consists of a controller-general, a secretary, assistant-secretary, two principal clerks, three first-class clerks, five second, ten third, twelve lower-division clerks, and four copyists. In addition, there is a technical staff of inspectors, and a solicitor.

This seems a large body of men to conduct such a department. When once everything is in order it must be a mere matter of routine to keep things going. So, at least, it must appear to the public.

But to begin with, the controller is in Parliament, and can therefore give but a limited portion of his time to the work of the office. Very likely, too, he was chosen for his ability in some field utterly unrelated to public amusements, and because his being in office would strengthen the hands of Government. Nevertheless, if he is a good man of business, and heads of departments

generally are, he earns his salary well, even if he only comes to the office at twelve and goes to the House at four—to work till two next morning for nothing.

The secretary is the permanent head of the office, and on his capability and energy depends in a great measure the efficiency of the department. Every matter of any importance is brought under his personal notice; constant practice enables him to attend to an astonishing number of affairs without losing his grasp of any, and to seize the points of the subject under discussion with certainty and quickness. He decides all ordinary questions—reserving the more important for discussion with his chief. To most of the staff he is the real head. The controller is generally invisible, and communicates with the office almost entirely through the secretary.

The assistant-secretary is what his title implies. He fills the secretary's place when the latter is away; takes under his charge routine work and the more ordinary questions that arise, and, generally, helps to relieve the secretary of the pressure that will come on him if he does his duty thoroughly.

To come to the body of clerks who form the great mass of what is usually understood by the Civil Service. Let us take a day in the life of one of the first-class; a man probably of thirty-eight or over, and whose income is about four hundred and fifty pounds. We will call him Mr. Jones.

It is ten minutes past ten as he enters the house which serves for the office, pending the erection of proper premises. His first duty is to sign the attendance-book. This is taken away at a quarter past ten, and those who are not present then have to sign next day, marking the hour at which they arrive. Mr. Jones looks ominous, as he discovers that his two assistants have not yet signed, though the quarter of an hour's grace is just up. They come in ten minutes late, and Mr. Jones calls their attention to the fact that it is the third time within a fortnight.

"My train was late, sir," pleads the lower-division man.

The third-class clerk, conscious that some day he may be a first-class clerk like Jones, makes no excuse, but changes his coat for a shabby office one, washes his hands, and sits down to work.

"Have you prepared that statement of rents receivable for me?" asks Mr. Jones of Mr. Smith, the lower-division man.

"No, sir, I haven't quite finished it."

"Do make haste about it," pleads Mr. Jones. He knows well enough the cause of the delay. Mr. Smith is working up for an examination for a superior clerkship, and devotes every moment he can to working unofficial sums, or solving algebraic problems; hence the neglect of official work. But Mr. Jones also is aware that Smith knows his work thoroughly, that he can do twice as much, when he tries, as the average lower-division clerk, and do it twice as correctly, so he puts up with his eccentricities with a sigh of helplessness, bemoaning the system under which every good lower-division man leaves the office just as he has learnt his work thoroughly.

This is a busy day, however, and Mr. Jones has but little time for bemoaning the state of the service generally. He has a pile of papers before him, and is painfully aware that the constant thud over his head is the stamp of the registering clerk, busily preparing the morning's letters for distribution amongst the various branches. The day's deliveries are perhaps one hundred and fifty letters; most of them on matters of routine, or simple accounts. Mr. Jones gets, perhaps, fifteen for a start; the rest reach him in dribbles, as they are ready.

He sorts them as they come. Seven of them are accounts. He passes them on to be checked, after a glance at them to see there is nothing unusual about them, then looks at the others.

Mr. Jones takes only the correspondence relating to the ground on which the premises under the inspection of the office are built. This morning brings him in two applications for permission to erect buildings on land which is the property of corporations, and one on land belonging to trustees for almshouses. With a want of business tact which Mr. Jones has met with too often to be surprised at, neither correspondent has sent with his letters anything to show that permission has been obtained from the landlords to build. The procedure is simple: Mr. Jones prepares a form of instructions as to the information required by the Department before the application can be considered; it is sent up to the copying-room for despatch, and that piece of business is postponed for a few days.

In all probability half the applications will never be renewed, the demands of the circular being too stringent. Mr. Jones,

as he puts the form of questions up, thinks it would not be difficult to improve it, and determines that as soon as he can find time he will see about it. But when will he find time? Work increases every day, so clerks think; the Treasury are always putting fresh work in the office because it is the only office in the service that does its work well, and yet directly a move is made, and application made for another clerk or two, they "fail to see the necessity," or "do not feel justified in the present state of public finances to increase the expenditure on the establishment."

At any rate there is plenty to do this morning. Brown of the next room is on leave, so Jones has his work thrown on his hands as well. As if that were not enough, he reads in the paper that a Radical member has moved for a return of all ground-rents paid for land occupied by premises under the department. The demand for this wretched return will arrive in a day or two, and then—Jones does not contemplate the prospect with relish. He is only too well aware that the vast and intricate question of ground-rents is one which he has yet to master. However, he will have to master it now, and no mistake, or else proclaim himself as a duffer, and that won't do with only three men between him and promotion. No; the Register of Ground Rents will be his companion for a good many evenings during the coming fortnight.

At this juncture of affairs Mr. Robinson, his assistant third-class clerk, brings him a paper at which he glances angrily. It is an estimate of expense which will be incurred in surveying the ground attached to the buildings in charge of the office. The object of the survey is to isolate as far as possible these buildings, so as to reduce the chance of fire. Mr. Jones takes considerable credit to himself for the idea; it is one of the consolations of a Government official that he can sometimes originate a measure for the public benefit.

"You're sure this is right?" queries Jones.

"Oh yes," is the reply.

Jones looks severe.

"This is the third time you've made out this statement, Robinson, and it's been wrong each time. How on earth am I to give the secretary the information he wants, if I can't depend on you for the merest routine?"

Robinson rather quakes at the mention of the secretary, but isn't going to be bullied by Jones, who only entered the

place six years before him, and has had tremendous luck. But Jones turns over the big registers with the air of a man who knows them backwards, and soon convinces Robinson that he is wrong.

"Look here," says Mr. Jones severely, "you've allowed three pounds fifteen shillings for survey of ground at Bolton, when you could have found out from this book that the ground there was let to the vicar for a mission chapel. And here at Farehurst we have a survey already, for the land is the property of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, and they had it surveyed. And look here——" And so on till poor Robinson is thoroughly convinced, and wishes that he had an easy-going fellow like Jenkins for a chief, instead of a martinet like Jones, who is always poking his nose into everything.

Jones, on the other hand, curses his luck in having a man like Robinson under him; he being a jovial, careless sort of fellow, very good company, but a very poor clerk. He was dancing till four that morning, so it is no wonder that he was late in arriving, and not very much inclined for business when he did turn up.

Here is half-past eleven, and the day's work scarcely begun. Jones sits down to it in earnest. He writes three or four letters, one a complicated one which will probably lead to litigation; he consequently feels he must be careful and choose his phrases. He could, if he liked, get the draft sent to the solicitor to see if there was anything wrong in it, but Jones has a small opinion of the solicitor's wisdom, and a considerable belief in his own, so he prepares the draft himself for the approval of the secretary. The file of papers in connection with the question is growing very thick; no paper-fastener will reach through it; but Jones knows every letter in the file, and has mastered every point that can arise; knows every precedent bearing on the case, and does not fear to be "bowled out" by a sudden piercing question from the secretary as to "whether we did not act somewhat differently in 1857, in the case of Morris's application?"

Jones has not spent twenty years in the office for nothing, and he will "run" that business through without a hitch, till at last he can proudly write the letters P. A. ("put away") on the pile, and send it up to the paper-keepers to be deposited amongst the archives of the office.

Just as he has finished his letters there is a resounding shriek from the whistle of

the speaking-tube. That means that Mr. Withers, the principal clerk, wants to see him. Jones hurries up, angry at the interruption. He is still more angry when he finds that he has to pay a visit to the Enclosure Commission Office to clear up a question which is in dispute about the ownership of a piece of land which the commissioners claim, but which Mr. Jones is of opinion is the property of his office. By the time he returns it is half-past one, and time for lunch. He finds that Mr. Robinson has already departed, and that Mr. Smith is busily engaged over a German grammar while he munches a hasty lunch of bread-and-cheese.

Mr. Jones is quite ready for his chop, which is duly brought him by a boy-messenger. It is burnt, but he is accustomed to that; he soon despatches it, and takes away the taste with a biscuit, which he keeps in his drawer, washing it down with a glass of sherry. There is a refreshment-room for those who care to visit it, but Mr. Jones prefers to take his meal quietly in his room, or else to go out and have it at a restaurant. His club is too far off, and if he goes there he is well aware he will not be back at work by two, for only half an hour is allowed for lunch; and though it is all very well for the fellows in rooms ten and twelve, who have nothing to do, to take an hour, it won't do for room number six, the apartment honoured by his presence.

Of course Mr. Smith sticks to his German grammar till told to shut it up, and almost equally of course Mr. Robinson is five minutes late in returning. However, by this time Mr. Jones is getting angry, and his subordinates see it, so there is very little more time wasted that day. Mr. Smith finishes his return of rents receivable in half an hour, and brings it up for examination and signature.

It is found, however, on inspection, that allowance has not been made for various taxes which can be deducted, and that certain properties have been built since the last quarterly return was made, which alters the sums receivable. A recent Act of Parliament, too, affecting Government and corporation lands generally, has come into operation, and fresh calculations will have to be made in many cases, some of them of considerable intricacy. Mr. Smith, well up in mathematics, thanks to his ap-preaching examination, attacks these with some amount of enthusiasm, but it is clear that the return cannot be finished to-day. And it is due in two days, or else the wrath

of the principal clerk, who has the accounts branch under his charge, will be outpoured on Mr. Jones in the shape of a minute calling attention to the delay. Mr. Jones begins to think that a civil servant's lot is not a happy one. He wishes some of those people who are always imagining Government clerks as reading the newspaper and thinking what they shall do next, could be in his shoes for a day. Hardest of all, he knows that men in other rooms are having easy times of it, yet it is impossible for him to say so. All he can do is to report that he has more than he can get through, and that he is loth to do. The secretary, he knows, looks upon him as a man who can get through his work well, and he does not want to give the impression that he is not as quick as he has credit for.

So the short day passes, all too soon for the work that has to be done, and when Big Ben strikes four Mr. Jones wishes that he could strike too. Mr. Smith goes at the very minute; he knows the terms of his contract and makes up for his lack of prospects in the office by spending as much time as he can out of it. His unfortunate chief buckles to for another hour, and finally takes home with him a portfolio of pressing work to look at at home.

However, this is only one side of a civil servant's life—a side that exists more often than is supposed. A very different existence is led by Sanderson, a second-class clerk on the other side of the passage which divides the ground-floor. He is a great musical man, a composer of some small celebrity, and critic on a weekly paper. His office address is the only one known to his business friends outside, and every morning he has to begin his day's work by opening and answering his private letters. He gets through his work somehow; he is in the room connected with the erection of buildings, so he is able to shelve all questions by referring them to the technical inspectors for report, and then acting blindly on their instructions. Of course his duty is to exercise control over them, looking upon them as the executive branch of the department, whilst his is the administrative; but that is not his view, and provided he can keep out of scrapes he does not much care.

But the heads of the office are not deceived as to Mr. Sanderson's powers and method of work. He will find when the time for promotion comes that one of his juniors is put quietly over his head, and he may consider himself fortunate if some

careless blunder does not before that lead to his losing part of his leave, or even (if his carelessness is flagrant) to the loss of his yearly increment.

This last mark of his superiors' displeasure is no slight punishment. If an increment is stopped for a year, and six years pass before the victim obtains his promotion, it is equivalent to a fine of about one hundred pounds. A still more severe punishment is suspension, during which time salary ceases altogether; and it is very difficult for a suspended clerk ever to regain the confidence of his chiefs.

One case of suspension only recently occurred in the office, and Sanderson has been talking it over with Menzies during lunch. A very black sheep has been at last convicted of deceiving the controller in the matter of sick-leave. The usual medical certificate was sent in, declaring that he was suffering from diphtheretic catarrh, and quite unable to attend at the office. However, by an unfortunate accident, the assistant-secretary met him in Hyde Park, and he was written to for an explanation. His excuse was that he was better, and that he thought a little exercise would do him good. As he was taking his exercise on a rather vicious mare, the controller was of opinion that he was quite well enough to attend to his rapidly accumulating arrears of work. As he was suspected of similar conduct once before, he was suspended for a month, his arrears being saddled on to some unfortunate man of the class of Jones, who never took a day's sick-leave as long as he could stand.

The great leave question is one which causes a considerable amount of discussion. Five weeks is the regular allowance, and by no means a bad one. The difficulty is how to arrange it so that every one shall get away when he wishes. In some of the large offices certain of the clerks have to take their holiday in the joyful month of November; toiling away at the official oar all through the summer, with added work owing to the absence of their happier colleagues. Then, too, the painters and whitewashers descend in force, and make the whole place unbearable. One consolation is, however, allowed when this incursion is made—everyone is allowed to smoke, a privilege denied during ordinary seasons, though occasionally furtively indulged in by clerks in distant rooms seldom visited by a chief.

The Public Amusements Inspection Office

is rather a literary office. Several of its members write for magazines or journals. Beyfus, one of the second-class, is known as a rising dramatic author. Carlton's essays on Ancient British Art have met with some attention from the archaeological world. It is very pleasant for three or four of these kindred spirits to meet after office, and, tabooing "shop," to forget for a while that there are such things in the world as leases and contracts. Sometimes business is slack, and gives them a chance of a quarter of an hour's literary discussion in some room whither they have wandered in search of official information. But there is an uneasy feeling in their minds as they talk, that, although their work does not press, the sooner it is done the better. And then there are the stock jobs to be taken up.

These stock jobs are the bane of official existence. They hang as a sword of Damocles over the head of every responsible clerk. Current work may be slack; for some reason no one wants to put up a new building of any kind; then is the time for attacking the vast mass of work for which there is no hurry, but which ought to be done. Old registers, scored and altered in the course of years, need revision and recopying; volumes require re-indexing; time is lost in having to refer to half-a-dozen books, which could be digested into one if only there was time to do it. Jones is certain that under certain Acts of last century the office has wider powers than is generally believed, and, briefly, there is no likelihood of the office expiring from inanition for some time yet.

The worst of it is that just as some Herculean labour is started by some industrious or ambitious man, his assistant is sure to be ill, or go away on leave, or a press of current work comes in, and the stock job has to be postponed till a more convenient season.

Whether the Government service is a pleasant profession or not depends entirely on the individual. To a man of studious habits, jealous of his leisure, not entirely dependent on his salary for his income, it is admirably suited. The ambitious, large-viewed man is out of place in it; he finds after a few years that, however hard he works at computations or returns, his chance of promotion out of his turn is but slight. For a few years a junior is tolerably content: one hundred pounds a year to begin with is more than he could make elsewhere; but when he is thirty, and he is still making less than three hundred

pounds, he begins to wish he had entered a profession; he looks with envy at his brother, a doctor, who is only two years older, and has a practice worth eight hundred or a thousand pounds. He forgets that his brother studied five years, and then bought a partnership, whilst he entered the service straight from school, and had a salary the first year.

There are, however, a few "plums" for the lucky. Sometimes a clerk is made an assistant-secretary, or even secretary; possibly he is chosen private secretary to the head of his office, and has an opportunity of showing what he is made of. Then when his chief is promoted to a post in the Cabinet, he follows him, and perhaps his fortune is made.

But these things are rare; much more common is it to find a man grown grey in the service, and embittered by constant disappointments. Waiting for dead men's shoes is proverbially unpleasant, and as a rule it is only through the death or retirement of those above him that a clerk can obtain a rise. Men reach the maximum salary of their class and remain there—those in the class above them being perhaps but a year or two older, and showing no signs of a disposition to make room for others. When his family increases, the unhappy civil servant wishes too late that he were in some employment where harder work meant more money, and feels that he would readily give up some of his once prized leisure if he could only obtain a corresponding increase of income.

But the last word shall not be a melancholy one. After all, a civil servant, if he is only tolerably fortunate in his career, has small reason to complain, when he compares himself with those who began the world as he did. True, some of his friends have made their fortunes, but others have failed; some are successful at the bar, or in the City, but he knows they work twice as hard as he does, and have not a moment they can call their own; others of his old schoolfellows he sees bowed down with anxiety, and scarcely able to make both ends meet. For himself, he knows he will never make his fortune, so, if he is wise, he is not disappointed at not doing so; but he can attain a modest competence; his income is a certainty, paid to the hour; he is not over-worked, he has plenty of leisure, he has good holidays, he mixes with pleasant people in his office, and is treated with consideration. Perhaps, after all, the

pleasantness or otherwise of official life is a question of temperament, but to those who think that the best state for a man is neither poverty nor riches, the Civil Service offers great attractions. To those who hold that without leisure life is not worth living, its attractions are still greater.

TRAVELS IN THE EAST.

PART IV

It was on the morning of Ash Wednesday that I was able to resume my journey in the East; a proper day, I thought, whereon to mortify the flesh by taking a long tramp.

As I jumped into the train that took me to my trysting-place, I somehow fell into a train of sentimental thought. It may have been suggested by some salt-fish in a window, as I approached the station. But, whatever was its origin, there arose the meditation that many an idle loungeur, who lolls about the West, might, by way of Lenten penance, do well to make a pilgrimage some fine day to the East. If it were a wet day, the penance might be greater, but the walking might be less. Worn out sight-seer though he were, he would behold a novel sight or two, and some perhaps might make him stare; and, though reflection is fatiguing, some might even make him think.

To one who leads a life of luxury and ease, it must seem a strange idea to have to slave in a back slum, and scarce get bread enough to eat. The point "Is life worth living?" may be put before a Sybarite, who deems it a hard labour to strike a match in order to light a cigarette; but it certainly presents a very different aspect when viewed by a poor shirtmaker, who, to save herself from starving, must daily work for fifteen hours at a stretch. A man who chiefly spends his time between his stable and his club, might haply get a trifle of his selfishness shamed out of him, if he were to pay a penitential visit to the East, and see the sort of lives that his fellow-men are living, and the sort of dwellings wherein they have to live.

With some few thoughts like these to beguile me on my way, I set forth on my day's travel; and shortly after noon I met my punctual guide at the appointed place. We had not proceeded far, when something led me to remark that I wished to see the rooms of some of those poor sempstresses, of whom there had been told such pitiable tales. "Nothing is more

easy," he replied, "there are plenty of them hereabouts," and well-nigh directly, on rounding the next corner, we entered a small street which, as it bore the name of an Eastern bird of prey, conveyed a covert reference to the sellers of cheap slop-work, made by starving of the poor.

Here, in a small house—though I need hardly use the epithet, for in the East there are none large—we climbed a few steep stairs, and knocked at a small door. This we found on the first-floor; at least it would have been the first-floor, if there had been a second and an answer to our knock bade us cheerily, "come in." We were welcomed very heartily by a pleasant-looking woman, in the poorest of poor clothes, who was "machining" at a table that stood beneath the window; a small bedstead being opposite, close beside the door. Her machine was on the table, and there likewise was her baby—a thin and solemn baby, sitting quite sedately in a very tiny chair, and staring silently at mother while she pursued her work. A curly, light-haired little boy was standing by her side; and in spite of all his raggedness he really would have looked a very pretty little fellow, but for the sore skin that showed the poorness of his blood. He was trying to make playthings of two little bits of firewood, to which, in shape of cat-o'-nine-tails, he had tied some scraps of tape. The cheapest of cheap clocks was ticking on the mantelpiece, and a small kettle was simmering beside a smaller fire, but neither of these noises stood a chance of interfering with the sound of the machine. Piled upon a chair, and put quite ready to her hand, lay a lot of little pieces of thickish grey tweed cloth, shaped as the two sides of what in the cheap clothing lists are recorded as "boys' vests." These were to be sewn, and neatly fitted to the back, and in point of fact the garment, button-holes excepted, was to be sewn throughout.

Buttons! Oh yes, certainly. She had to put the buttons on, and to press the work, when finished. And she also had to pay for the hire of the machine, and to buy her needles too, she had, and pay for her own thread. Sewing pretty steadily from seven in the morning until nine or so at night, merely stopping for her meals, and not long neither for them, she could manage pretty well to make three waistcoats in a day, and she was paid sometimes sixpence, sometimes sevenpence apiece.

That was all they could depend on just

at present for their living, because her husband, a dock labourer, could scarcely get any work. Tried his uttermost, he did, she was sure of that, but there, you know, luck didn't always come to them who wanted it the most. Shirts! Yes, she'd made shirts; but it really didn't pay, scarce. Starvation sort o' work it was, a'most as bad as making match-boxes. You had to machine 'em when shaped out, and do 'em regular right through, you had, excep' the button'-oles, you know; and there was, well, a stiffish bit o' stitchin' in a dozen shirts. And you had to find your needles and your cotton, too, you had, and that, you know, would come to close on twopence-farthing, or even twopence-halfpenny, 'cause both thread and needles, too, they often would get broke, when the stuff were extry stiff. And there, a shilling a dozen was all as you could get for 'em, so you scarce earned more nor ninepence by a hardish day o' work.

Her statement was interrupted at this point by the arrival of a visitor, who entered without knocking, as though her visits were too frequent to need any announcement. She was rather a pretty girl, with features small and delicate; and she might have looked much prettier had her cheeks been somewhat plumper and a shade less pale. She was very plainly clothed in an old dress of thin material, which in respect of thinness was suited to her figure. Her voice was rather thin too, and high-pitched in its tone, as though it had been sharpened to a business sort of point. She spoke quite pleasantly, however, and her words were well pronounced, with no cockneyfied misuse of the eighth letter of the alphabet; but with a certain briskness which showed that she was capable of speaking her own mind.

On her entrance she exchanged a friendly greeting with my guide, whom she seemed much pleased to see. He called her by her christian-name, having known her from her childhood, and she had long been a good helper to him in his mission-work.

Soon letting her tongue loose, as though it needed exercise, and this five minutes' leisure were too rare a treat to miss, she replied to all my questions well-nigh ere they were put. Her age was twenty-one, she owned without a scruple, although she hardly would be thought as much, except for her worn face. A hard worker all the week, she worked hard at the Sunday-school, where she had herself been taught most of the knowledge she possessed. She

was living with her mother, as she had done all her life, and she didn't mean to leave her, though it wasn't altogether what you'd think an easy life. Machining all day long isn't what you'd call quite fancy needlework, you know, such as ladies like to do when they're tired of sitting idle. Ah yes, she was often tired of sitting, but she'd never had the chance of getting tired of being idle. How long would it take her? Well, she couldn't tell exactly. But it wouldn't take her long to go and have a try.

Briskly taking part in the commercial conversation interrupted by her visit, she added a few details from her own experience. With a rapid stream of words which it was difficult to stem, and which seemed flowing from her heart, she vividly described and vehemently denounced the disadvantages of piecework, so far, at least, as the worker was concerned. "You can do your work at home?" "Oh yes, of course you can. But there's not much good in that when you've your meals to cook, you know, and your fire to pay for, if you can't stand freezing. And there's your candle you must find, and that ain't bought for nothing. Then there's the time you lose in going for your work, and returning it when finished. And you've got to take the tram, for you'd tire yourself to death by walking all the way with a big bundle on your head, and they'd not think you respectable if you didn't wear a bonnet. Well, yes, the tram's only two-pence, but every penny counts when you work for such small profit. Then there's the time you lose when you buy your silk or cotton, for you must get it to match the colour of the cloth, and that ain't always easy. But the worst is, you're kept waiting such a time when you want to get your work, and—well, yes—a good deal more, too, when you want to get your money. You see, the foreman won't be hurried, and the clerks they won't be bothered for the likes of you, you know. Ah, it's tiresome work that waiting. It's all lost time, you know, and it ain't pleasure either—and it's hours and hours maybe before you leave the warehouse."

I enquired whether she thought that any difference of creed led to any difference in the terms of her employers; whether, for instance, she considered that the Christians or the Jews were the harder of her task-masters. She replied, and her reply was echoed by the woman, as sharing her experience, that Christian and Jew were pretty

much alike, in regard to their capacity for driving a hard bargain. If there were a shade of preference, perhaps, upon the whole, she would rather work for Jews, for there was less pretence about them. They didn't much pretend to being better than they were; and this she thought could not be said so truly of the people who belonged to the more popular religion. Oh no, there was nothing of the Jewess about her. She didn't look much like Rebecca Isaacs, did she? But she must say what she thought, you know. And really now, as far as their commercial conscience is concerned in beating down their work-folk to the lowest of low wages, she thought—well, yes, since you put it so, she really thought the Jew was pretty nigh the better Christian.

Baby, who had sat quite silent in his chair, and who, indeed, from his lofty position on the table, appeared to be the chairman of this little trade-meeting, at this point of the conference emitted a small cry, which might have been construed as a speech, to intimate the need of taking some refreshment. Whereupon his mother stopped her sewing; and the honourable chairman, having left the chair, was taken to her bosom, and the meeting was adjourned, perhaps to the Greek Kalends.

With the vigour of her voice still ringing in our ears, and having a desire to hear some further morsels of her wisdom and experience, we followed the chief speaker to her dwelling, not far distant. Here she introduced me to her mother, a poor widow who lived poorly by her needle, as her chatty child did also. She had two sons besides, one of whom lived with them and helped to pay the rent by doing certain barge-work; her two tiny, tidy, little rooms costing every week just half-a-crown apiece. Her other son, a sailor, had been wrecked on his first voyage, and had brought home precisely sixpence after seven months at sea; whereto, notwithstanding this bad start, he had returned.

The room looked on the whole less badly furnished than the last, and there were several small photographs hung about the chimney-piece, and on it were a (doubtful) china ornament or two, which to Eastern connoisseurs, no doubt, were precious works of arts. In one of the small portraits taking by the sun, my guide, after a minute of the deepest meditation, thought he recognised some semblance to a somebody called "Charley," to whom he smilingly accused the girl of having been engaged.

Whereto she answered naively: "No, no, Mr. Austin, I made love to him perhaps, but I never got engaged to him. Besides," she added, gravely smiling, "he couldn't marry much of me, while he was out of work, and I hadn't saved a sixpence to be settled as my fortune; and perhaps we should have found you forbidding of the baans, for you know you never would have spared me from the Sunday-school."

Here, to change the subject, which might have led from smiles to tears if she were longer to pursue it, I asked for further details as to her plain needlework; and I gained more knowledge of the noble art of tailoring than I had ever dreamed of in my latter-day philosophy, or could gather from the wisdom of Sartor Resartus.

Buttons always are a bother, as every man and woman knows. But button-holes, in fact, are a bigger bother still, at least so far as the process of their making is concerned. And button-holes, the girl said, were included in the bargain lately driven by her taskmaster; and they were to be sewn with silk too, which increased their cost to her. And there were pockets to be sewn, too, in the waistcoats she was making; and this was extra labour, though she had no extra pay for it. She thought the poor folk of the East were sure of being beaten down when they applied for work. They were known to be half starving, and advantage had been taken of the pitiable fact. She and her mother, by working pretty hard, could make, each of them, a couple of good waistcoats in a day; and each earned upon the whole about a shilling by her work. Nor would the nether garments yield more profit to the family. For making them outright, button-holes and all, the cloth having been cut out, from sixpence to eightpence was now the current price, and there were a dozen buttons to be sewn on, and the sewer had to find both needles and thread.

After singing us a little solo, as it were, in her high-pitched little voice, about the hardness of her life and the avarice of trade—the Chant of the Cheap Clothes Maker, I might, perhaps, have called it, if I had only tried to string her phrases into rhythm, and to make them rhyme—the little daughter took a part in a trio, or quartette I may say even (for my own fine bass was heard in it), having for its theme the slavery of slop-work and the scarcity of food. Then she joined her mother in singing a duet, wherein, as in an eclogue, they mutually extolled the virtues of my

guide. At length, by way of a refrain, the daughter chirruped suddenly: "Well, I know that you've been quite a father both to me and mother. Hasn't he, now, mother?" To which astounding question mother smilingly assented, though it was patent at a glance that my guide, to say the least, is a score of years her junior.

Leaving this good widow and her cheerful, chatty little daughter to resume their ill-paid labour, we descended from the lowly height of their first-floor, and resumed our Eastern journey through the wilderness of brickwork. After half a mile or so, which seemed well-nigh a league, of its dull wearisome monotony, we at length approached some Buildings, which bore their builder's name; at least, so one might think, for certainly no other than the architect himself would have been proud to put his name to such a dismal-looking place. The special "building" that we entered looked hardly like a house. An out-building one might call it, for it stood at the row's end; and it appeared so tumbledown that one wondered how it stood. The walls were all of wood, and more than half of it looked rotten; and they seemed somehow held together by their contact with the roof. Of one small storey was the building, like the fabric of a fairy tale. It possessed, however, a small piece of ground behind, where lean fowls could be fattened, which, perhaps, they rarely were; a real back yard one might term it, for it barely measured more. Perhaps on this account the rental of the mansion and estate reached the formidable figure of twelve shillings a week.

Bells and knockers are at present luxuries unknown to the poor dwellers in the East. My guide, however, using his knuckles, obtained a speedy hearing, and, cheerily as before, we were bidden to come in. The mention of the rent demanded for the mansion, which was thrice as much as any before stated, had raised my expectations to rather a high pitch, and I was, therefore, not surprised to find the family assembled around a good-sized table, which displayed the unexpected possession of a table-cloth, and the perhaps still less expected sight of a boiled fowl. Not a whole one, mind you, but merely her remains. I learned her gender afterwards, when I was told her date of birth, and accidental death. Inasmuch as both her drumsticks and a fragment of her breast, even, had resisted the attack of no fewer than seven appetites, I concluded that she

resembled the old turkey (mentioned by Sam Weller) whose one consolation was, when dying, that he was "werry tough."

The seven appetites belonged to a mother and five children, and a poor old half-blind creature who sat crouching by the chimney-corner, in a chair that seemed a size too large for her spare limbs. I mistook her for the grandmother, till her feeble voice corrected me. "No, sir, I ain't no relative. I'm only a lodger, and a trouble to 'em all. I'm a burden, that's what I am, now as I'm getting blind." "No, no," cried mother heartily, "you're no burden, not a bit of it. There, don't you go a whimperin', there's a dear good soul. There ain't nothin' to whimper for, 'cause you ain't a mite of trouble to us. And you needn't think about it now my husbin's in full work again."

These few kindly words appeared to cheer the poor old woman, whose spirits seemed depressed by the dinner she had eaten—perhaps, indeed, the fowl had been too tough for her old teeth. I somehow guessed that, though a lodger, she paid nothing for her rent, and next to nothing for her keep. Indeed, how could she, poor old soul, nearly blinded as she was, earn anything to pay?

Untidy though it was, and littered everywhere with "orts"—which Dr. Johnson has defined to be "things left or thrown away," and has furthermore declared to be an obsolete expression, though in the East it is still extant—the room looked really splendid, compared with the poor sempstress's. It was far more spacious than any we had seen, and was in fact a double room—the bed being about four feet distant from the dinner-table. Odds and ends of clothing lay scattered here and there, amidst a chaos of cheap nicknacks and some domestic crockery. The floor, not overclean, was partly covered by some carpet, and the walls, not over white, were well-nigh wholly hidden by a lot of large cheap pictures, and a number of small photographs. "Plenty of colour for your money," had very plainly been the maxim of the purchaser, and viewed only from this point, his buying had been fortunate. One of these high-toned works of art showed a clown in full stage costume, with a six-foot string of sausages, giving a dancing-lesson to a pretty-little child, who, attired as a fairy, was practising her steps. Another biggish picture, more highly-coloured still, with plenty of red about the lips and cheeks, and black about the curl-

hair and bushy beard, had been, not very obviously, enlarged from father's photograph, which, for purpose of comparison, was hanging close at hand. A little empty cage was suspended from the ceiling, just over the table. Noticing its emptiness, I heard a piteous tale of how (the lamp behaving badly in the absence of its mistress) a poor little feathered prisoner had, by sad mishap, been slowly smoked to death.

There were likewise six brass candlesticks ranged upon the chimney-piece, and these aroused my admiration more than all the works of art. "But they're dreadful dusty, an' want a polish badly," said the woman in apology for their neglected state. "They'll get it too, come Saturday," she added, as she caught my eye, just glancing at the chaos. "Yes, it's a rare mess as the room is in. But you know you can't be all'ys as you'd like to be. 'Speshly when you've got a lot o' little uns to look after, and your husbin's clothes to see to, and him a workin' in the coal too, it takes a sight o' washin' to make his shirt-sleeves clean."

The "husbin" worked at certain gas-works not far distant, whence he weekly brought his wife a sovereign for her house-keeping. "He earns more nor that, though," said the mother with a smile; "but he puts it away somewhere. No, it don't go down his throat now. He's a teetotterer, is my husbin'. We're all teetottlers here, and he's the strictest of the lot. But he investes of it somewheres, in the post-office per'aps. 'Cause he's precious careful now he is, now as he've took the pledge. Says he, 'It's well to have a trifle 'andy like,' says he, 'case as you falls ill or gets a accident,' he says. For one can't all'ys be healthy, though he's a careful one, he is, and he don't go a runnin' of no risks as he can't help. But there, savin's better'n borryin', that's what he says. An' mind you, he's about right there, he is. Borryin's a bad thing. When folks begin a borryin', they mostly ends a buryin'. Often drinks theirselves to death they does, 'cause they keeps gettin' deeper in, until they're right down desperate."

The speaker, a Creole, was born at Havre, it appeared, though speaking English fluently, and with no trace of foreign accent. She looked strongly built enough to be the parent of ten children, her two firstborn being twin sons, aged now twenty-six. Six of her children still lived with her, five of whom were present, and all were dark and woollv-headed like herself.

"They're a deal fonder o' him now," continued she reflectively, and then added with a laugh, "now as he don't wallup them. They used to catch it hot a' times, when he were in the drink. An' they're fonder o' me too, an' ain't so much afeerd o' me, now as I've reformed. Well there, I was a bad 'un, now weren't I, Mr. Austin? A blessed day it was, when your mission-chaps got hold o' me, that time I were so mad. An' a 'ardish work you had, too, when you first took me in 'and. Many's the time I've been a lying on the one side o' the gutter, an' there was my own husbin' a lying on the t'other, an' both of us so tight as we had to be picked out of it. I often wonder I'd not done for some o' them poor children, when I'd got the devil in me, through the drink. One time I rem'ber ketchin' up the bilin' kettle, and a chuckin' it bang at 'em, but it missed 'em by good luck."

I asked her if she recollected when it was her house was last put in repair; for it looked rather rickety, and seemed only lath and plaster. "Well, sir," she answered with a smile, "maybe my memory is bad, but I can't really reck'lect as anythin's been done since we've been here, and that's now seven year come next August. And it don't look over air-tight, do it, when you come to see the cracks there is? Nor it wouldn't take a hearthquake to bring it on our 'eads neither. But there, we somehow makes it do, an' it keeps us fairish warm, for there's a pretty tidy lot of us to live in it. My boy Tom, he often says to me, 'Mother,' he says, 'I wonder why you likes to live in that old pigsty.' But he've a house of his own, has Tom, now as he've got married, an' he seems proud about his place too, 'cause, you see, his missus keeps a little shop there. 'Why, you papers it,' he says, 'and paintes it you does, and 'angs your pictur's on the walls, an' there you cosies yourself up, an' makes believe as you live comfor'able. But it ain't much of a 'ouse for a family o' Christyuns. Why, my old moke,' says he, 'would hardly like to live in it.'"

"Ah, you're a lookin' at that box, sir," continued my informant, whose tongue ran on so glibly that possibly some slight impediment in her speech might, when it occurred, be welcomed by her family. "Well, yes, it do seem a bit cur'ous. That's a 'armonium, that's what it is, an' plays The Bells of 'Eaven beautiful. My husbin' bought it speshal for to give me my last buthday. Cost him a sight o'

money. Two pun' seven an' six, it did; true as ever I stan' here it did. Says he, 'Old woman, I've been thinkin' as your voice is growin' a bit 'usky like. 'Tain't so 'earty as it were, nor yet so strong for singin' neither. So, as you're fond o' music,' he says, 'I've bought you this here hinstrument,' says he. 'Well, yes,' he says, 'it cost me a bit dear, an' it's kinder of a lux'ry. But since we've give the drink up, we can pretty well afford it.' So now, you know, he often plays a tcon or two to amuse us in the evenin'; and sometimes of a Sunday, when he's a playin' of a 'im, we get a reg'lar congregation out there in the court, we do."

"BACHELOR'S HALL"

IN TWO PARTS. PART I.

MOST readers are familiar with many incidents in the life and writings of Charles Dibdin the elder. Few probably know of his visit to Willey, in Shropshire, and his cordial reception by Salopian fox-hunters. He came down at the invitation of the Willey Squire, George Forester, as he was familiarly called, a renowned foxhunter about the latter end of the last century, and one of the family of Foresters of which Anthony, or Tony Foster, of Sir Walter Scott's novel, was a member. Dibdin's object in coming into the country was to collect materials for the hunting-song he afterwards wrote, which Incledon, then in the height of his fame, made famous at Drury Lane Theatre, and which, as we scarcely need remind our sporting friends, begins:

You all knew Tom Moody, the whipper-in, well.

The veteran sportsman and patriotic song-writer were "good fellows, well met," and Dibdin found himself in such congenial society that he stayed some time, and visited many places of interest.

He was highly pleased with what he heard and saw, particularly with the old hall itself, presenting as it did a picture of the homes of the country gentry at a period prior to the setting in of the modern spirit of revision and renewal.

This old mansion, indeed, or so much as remains of it, is still as suggestive of olden times as when Dibdin saw it. It is all the more striking, perhaps, from standing near-neighbour to the more aspiring modern mansion of the present Lord Forester. It is situated on rising

ground, at the foot of a wooded ridge which formed part of a royal chase, of which the Willileys, who lived here, were overseers; so that it came down associated with national sports and pastimes into the hands of the Foresters, who originally were foresters by royal appointment. One of them, John Forester, of Watling Street, was privileged by royal grant to wear his hat in the presence of the king. Little is left of these wide forest-lands where kings and lordly priors sported, but the hunting-lodge, where sportsmen of that day hung up their bugle-horns, bows, and cross-bows, and sought refreshment and repose, remains; as also do names of places, like the "Deer-leap," the "Hay" (haia), the "Hurst," the "Frith," not to mention a few forest trees to indicate its extent. Loudon describes one of these monarchs cut down in Willey Park which spread one hundred and fourteen feet, and had a trunk nine feet in diameter, exclusive of the bark. It contained twenty-four cords of yard-wood, eleven and a half cords of four-foot wood, two hundred and fifty-two park palings six feet long, one load of cooper's wood, sixteen and a half tons of timber in all the boughs; twenty-eight tons of timber in the body, and this besides faggots and boughs which had dropped off. The few patriarchal-looking trees remaining are now carefully tended; some being looped and propped, and all highly cared for on account of early associations; but in old George Forester's time the place might have stood for Sir Walter Scott's sketch of Cumnor Place, in which he describes formal walks and avenues in part choked up with grass, interrupted by billets, piles of brushwood, and an old-fashioned gateway in the outer wall, with door of oaken leaves, studded with nails. This picture of the approaches to the mansion of Anthony Foster was no doubt a more faithful representation than the character Scott gave of the man himself; at any rate, it is one which in many respects applied to Willey Hall and its surroundings about the time to which the novelist refers. Everything was old and old-fashioned, as its owners prided themselves it should be, and as grey as time and lichens growing in a congenial atmosphere could make it. Hollies, yews, and junipers were to be seen in the grounds, and outside, as we have said, were oaks and other aged trees, scathed by lightning's bolt and winter's blast, carrying the thoughts back to the days when the wild deer bounded through wild conee and tangled dell.

Who first built the hall neither history nor tradition informs us; and we are left equally to conjecture by a study of the building itself. Like primary rocks intruding into secondary formations there were outcrops of ancient structures projecting into more modern masonry.

From lawn and grounds adjoining, paths led to flower-gardens, intersected by walks and grassy terraces where a sun-dial stood, and a fountain, fed by copious supplies from an unfailing spring on the high grounds, threw silvery showers above the shadows of the shrubs into the sunlight. Judging from its quaint gables and chimneys, it must have had something of the poetry of art about it when it was complete: its irregularities of outline must have fitted in, as it were, with the undulating landscape, with which its walls were everywhere tinted into harmony by brown and yellow lichens. It had nothing assuming or pretentious; it was content to stand close neighbour to the old coach road which came winding by between two old borough towns, Bridgnorth and Wenlock, and passed beneath the arch which now connects the high-walled gardens with a shaded walk leading to the present seat of the Foresters.

In the hall were horns and antlers, and other trophies of the chase; antique specimens of guns which had done good service in their time; ancient time-pieces, singular in construction and quaint in contrivance, one of which on striking the hours of noon and midnight set in motion figures with trumpets and other instruments, giving forth appropriate sounds. Next, a lamp, hoisted into position by a rope, lighted up the hall, from which a staircase ascended to the gallery. Indeed, the interior was everywhere in character with the exterior—the same air of antiquity reigned inside as out. There were capacious chimney-pieces, rooms wainscoted with oak, and on the walls portraits of the Squire's predecessors of the Weld and Forester lines, in stiff-starched frills, capacious vests, and small round hats of Henry the Seventh's reign, with others of the fashion of earlier and later periods by distinguished painters. Here and there, by less famous artists, were pictures of favourite horses and dogs, the virtues and special merits of which local poets had been employed to set forth in verse. These cherished efforts of the painter's and poet's art have been honoured in the new hall with a gallery to themselves; and the late lord, who was for many years master of the

Belvoir Hunt, took a special pleasure in showing them to brother sportsmen, serving as they do to illustrate the development of the breed of the modern foxhound, which differs much from its ancestors in what has been called the golden age of fox-hunting even. The lines beneath the earliest effort contain the following invitation :

Sportsmen look up, old Childers' picture view,
His virtues many were, his failings few ;
Reynard with dread oft heard his awful name,
And grateful Musters thus rewards his fame.

Pigmy, said to have been the smallest hound then known, has underneath her portrait the lines :

Behold in miniature the foxhound keen,
Thro' rough and smooth a better ne'er was seen ;
As champion here the beauteous Pigmy stands,
She challenges the globe, both home and foreign lands.

(Date 1773.)

Another, of the same date, has :

Ye that remember well old Savoury's call,
With pleasure view'd her, as she pleased you all ;
In distant countries still her fame resounds,
The huntsman's glory and the pride of hounds.

The fourth, a white dog, Pilot, is thus described :

Pilot rewards his master Rowley's care,
And swift as lightning skims the transient air ;
Famed for the chace, from cover always first,
His tongue and sterne proclaim an arrant burst.

(Date 1774.)

Like all true sportsmen, the Squire prided himself much on his hounds. Tom Rose—honest old Tom, as he was called—used to say a man must breed his pack to suit his country, a view the Squire had long taken, and, although he admired the Duke of Grafton's dogs, he preferred his own.

Curious and highly characteristic letters of the Squire are before us, containing correspondence with noblemen and others on the technical features desirable in the breed of dogs ; but it may suffice to say that both the kind of hound in use and style of hunting in vogue in Squire Forester's day differed much from the present. It was no unusual thing to see Moody, the whipper-in, taking the hounds to cover before daylight in a morning. Like other sportsmen of the period, the Squire was an early riser ; four o'clock on a hunting morning found him preparing his inner man with a breakfast of underdone beef, and eggs beaten up in brandy to fill the interstices. Thus fortified, although what is termed rather a heavy rider, he could top a flight of rails, skim ridge and furrow, and charge a fence, with Moody, Phoebe Higgs, or any of them. Phoebe, who often accompanied him, was a com-

plete Diana in her way. She would take hazardous leaps, beckoning Mr. Forester to follow, which led him to wager heavy sums that in leaping she would beat any woman in England. With Phoebe and Moody, and a few other choice spirits, on a scent, there was no telling to what point between the two extremities of the Severn it might carry them. They might turn up some few miles from its source or its estuary, and not be heard of at Willey for a week. One long persevering run into Radnorshire, in which a few plucky riders continued the pace for some distance, and then left the field to the Squire, Moody, and one or two others, who kept the heads of their favourites in the direction Reynard was leading, passed into a tradition ; but the brush appears not to have been fairly won, a gamekeeper having sent a shot through the leg of the "varmint" in a churchyard—an event commemorated in doggerel lines extant. One tradition of a run boasted of at the time of Dibdin's visit was with a fox which had repeatedly non-plussed hounds and huntsmen by escaping up a tree in Mog Forest. Only one man knew of it, and he, a neighbouring squire, honourably kept the secret. Another was of a fox, also with more than the usual cunning of his species, that as often proved a match for the hounds. One morning, Mr. Forester, having made up his mind for a run, repaired to Tickwood, where this fox was put up. Reynard went off in the direction of the Brown Clee Hills, then took a turn for a noted cover called Thatcher's Coppice ; from there he started for the Titterstone Hills, then back to Tickwood, where the hounds ousted him, and then he took them over the same ground again. By this time the huntsman's horse was so blown that he took Moody's, sending Tom with his own to an inn to get spiced ale and a feed. The fox was now on his way back, and the jaded horse on which Tom was seated no sooner heard the horn than he dashed away and joined the chase. Ten couple of fresh hounds were then let loose from the kennels in Willey Hollow, which again turned the fox in the direction of Aldenham, but, with the exception of Moody, whose horse now fell dead under him, all were far behind. The dogs too had had enough, and the fox once more beat his pursuers, but only to die in a drain on the Aldenham estate, where he was found a week afterwards.

These and other adventures were related for Dibdin's information at a social gather-

ing at the hall. The Squire was accustomed to these meetings, which, when sport was not the topic of conversation, assumed the character of a sort of local Parliament of the ruling powers, or lesser lights of the district, who were themselves in turn ruled by the Squire of Willey. These embraced justices of the peace, most of them parsons, doctors, lawyers, and owners of small neighbouring estates which, to the number of ten or twelve, have since been absorbed in that of Willey. On this occasion more than the usual number of local notables assembled, the Willey chaplain, the Rev. Michael Pye Stephens, a foxhunter and justice of the peace, with several others, being amongst them.

Being a distant relative, Stephens was on familiar terms with the Squire, and the more so as he was able to tell a good tale and sing a good song. The rural clergy then were great acquisitions at the tables of these country squires, and were not unfrequently among the most enthusiastic lovers of the chase.

A "meet" at Willey or in that neighbourhood was sure to be well attended, not only because of the certainty of sport, but because sport was preceded or followed by receptions at the hall, so famous for its cheer. Jolly were the doings on these occasions, songs were sung, tales were told, old October ale flowed freely. The Squire generally dined about four o'clock, and the invited came booted and spurred ready for the hunt, and rarely left the festive board beneath the hospitable roof of their host till they mounted in the courtyard next morning.

The Squire was never married, and Dibdin, in Bachelor's Hall, has given a representation of these gatherings, his portraits of horses and dogs, together with his descriptions of the social habits of the squire and his friends, being thus set forth:

To Bachelor's Hall we good fellows invite
To partake of the chase which makes up our delight,
We've spirits like fire, and of health such a stock,
That our pulse strikes the seconds as true as a clock.
Did you see us you'd swear that we mount with a
grace,
That Diana had dubb'd some new gods of the chase.
Hark away! hark away! all nature looks gay,
And Aurora with smiles ushers in the bright
day.

Dick Thickset came mounted upon a fine black,
A finer fleet gelding ne'er hunter did back;
Tom Trig rode a bay full of metal and bone,
And gaily Bob Buckson rode on a roan;
But the horse of all horses that rivalled the day
Was the Squire's Neck-or-Nothing, and that was a
grey.

Hark away! etc.

Then for hounds there was Nimble who well
would climb rocks,
And Cocknose a good one at finding a fox;
Little Plunge, like a mole, who would ferret and
search,
And beetle-browed Hawk's Eye so dead at a lurch;
Young Shy-looks that scents the strong breeze from
the south,
And Musical Echo with his deep mouth.
Hark away! etc.

Our horses, thus all of the very best blood,
'Tis not likely you'd easily find such a stud;
Then for foxhounds, our opinion for thousands
we'll back,
That all England throughout can't produce such a
pack.
Thus having described you our dogs, horses, and
crew,
Away we set off, for our fox is in view.
Hark away! etc.

Sly Reynard's brought home, whilst the horn
sounds the call,
And now you're all welcome to Bachelor's Hall;
The savoury sirloin gracefully smokes on the board,
And Bacchus pours wine from his sacred hoard.
Come on, then, do honour to this jovial place,
And enjoy the sweet pleasures that have sprung
from the chase.
Hark away! hark away! while our spirits are
gay,
Let us drink to the joys of next meeting day.

At the gathering to which we more especially now refer, as a treat to Dibdin, the second course at dinner consisted of the best Severn fish, few of which are now found so high up in the river, consisting of eels cooked in various ways, flounders, perch, trout, carp, grayling, pike, and, at the head of the table, that king of fish, a Severn salmon.

Dibdin: "This is a treat, Squire, and I now understand why the Severn is called the 'Queen of Rivers;' it deserves this distinction for its king of fish, if for nothing else."

Mr. Forester: "Do you know, Dibdin, that engineering fellow, Jessop, wants to put thirteen or fourteen weirs in, which would shut out every fish worth eating."

"What can be his object?" asked Dibdin.

"Oh, he believes, like Brindley, that rivers were made to feed canals with, and his backers say, to make the river navigable at all seasons; but my belief is that it will crush out what bit of trade remains, and give them a monopoly in the carrying trade, as our bargemen would be taxed, whilst their carriers would be free lower down."

"We beat them, though," said Mr. Pritchard, a country banker.

"So we did," added the Squire; "but it was a hard job. Begad, I thought our watermen had pretty well primed me when I went up as a deputation to see Pitt; but I had not been with him five minutes

before I found he knew more about the river than I did :

" I am no orator, as Brutus is,
But, as you know me all, a plain and honest man."

Several voices : " Bravo, Squire."

To Stephens : " Will you take a flounder ? ' Flat as a flounder,' they say ; and you have a sympathy with flats, if not a liking for them."

" They made a flat of him when they dragged his pond for the fish he was so grateful for," said Hinton, the town clerk of Wenlock.

The laugh went against the parson, who felt that he was not quite himself, having missed his share of venison-pasty, a favourite dish of his. He had been helped to a slice from a haunch in the centre of the table, and a cut from a saddle of mutton at the end, but didn't get his usual allowance, he said.

" Is it true," enquired Dibdin, looking round at roast, and boiled, and pasties, " what we hear in London, that there is very considerable scarcity in the country ?" (Laughter.) The remark brought up questions of political economy, excess of population, stock-jobbing, gentlemen taking their money out of the country, and aping Frenchified stick-frog fashions on their return. The latter was a favourite subject with the Squire, who was an M.P., and could not see, he was wont to say, what amusement gentlemen could find out of the country equal to fox-hunting in it, and who held the theory of taxing heavily those who did so. The discussion lasted over the fifth course, when the more potent liquors were put upon the table with Broseley pipes. The latter afforded a temptation Stephens could not resist of retaliating upon the Squire by telling of his having purchased a box for which he paid a high price in London, and finding, on showing them to a tenant, that they had been made upon his own estate. The laugh went against the Squire, who by a merry twinkle in his eye gave indication that he would take the first opportunity of being quits. Discussions ensued upon the refusal of Parliament to allow a census, one of the guests expressing a belief, founded upon a statement of Dr. Price, that the population of England and Wales was less than it was in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. " Which," added the Squire, " is not correct, as poor-law statistics before Parliament show that there are from three to four births to one death."

Mr. Forester : " A truce to politics, let

us have Larry Palmer, our local Incledon, in to sing Dibdin's songs." (General approbation.)

Larry, who was blind and purposely kept in ignorance of Dibdin being present, gave in succession what Incledon called his " sheet-anchors," The Quaker, My Trim-built Wherry, Tom Bowling, etc., with such effect and force as made the author exclaim that he never heard greater justice done to his compositions. This led to an exhibition of feeling which made the old hall ring again.

Dibdin's health was of course given, with laudatory remarks as to the effect of his effusions on the loyalty, valour, and patriotism which at that time blazed so intensely in the bosoms of British tars.

The author, in acknowledging the toast, related incidents he several times witnessed at sea ; told of his indebtedness to Incledon and others, and added particulars as to the sources of his inspiration and means of his success.

The Squire was next rallied on his not marrying ; the last bit of Court scandal was discussed ; some tales told of the king, with whom Mr. Forester had been on terms of friendship, when regent, were told ; and the festivities of the evening had extended into the small hours, when, during a pause, a great crash was heard, and the Squire rushing out to see what was the matter, found that the sound came from the larder, whither he repaired. Looking in, he saw Stephens in his shirt, on which he turned the key and went back to his company to consider how to turn the incident to account.

Stephens, it appears, had been several hours in bed, when waking up after a first sleep he fancied he should like another dip into the venison-pie ; and forthwith went down into the larder, where, whilst searching for the pie, he knocked down the dish with one or two more. The Squire, who was not long in making up his mind, declared that it was time to retire, but before doing so he said they must have a country dance ; and he insisted upon the ladies and the whole household being roused to take part. There was no resisting the host ; the whole of the inmates assembled, and formed sides in the hall, through which Stephens must necessarily pass in going to his room. Mr. Forester then slipped the key into the door and unkennelled his fox, getting behind him and making the parson run the gauntlet in his shirt amid an indescribable scene of merriment and confusion !

GEORGIE: AN ARTIST'S LOVE.

A STORY IN SIX CHAPTERS. CHAPTER V.

ONE sunshiny afternoon in the early part of June, Myra was making her way across the pretty little Park Monceau, full, as usual, of bonnes with their clean white caps, and their little, shrill-voiced charges.

She was going to her lover's studio in the Boulevard de Courcelles; he was finishing a picture he had been painting for the Comte de L——, a well-known Italian connoisseur, and she had promised to go and see it. It had been agreed that Mr. Rentoul was to bring her back, and then to convey the two ladies to Vincennes, where they were to dine *al fresco*.

Myra was in no hurry, she had allowed herself more than time to keep her appointment, and she found it pleasant to linger there, in the shade of the trees, with the distant hum of the city just audible.

Life had become very sweet to her; it was good to be young, good to be strong, good to love.

She reached the studio a little breathless, it was at the top of a house of five storeys.

Mr. Rentoul opened the door himself—palette and brushes in hand.

"You are punctuality itself," he told her, smiling. "I will use up what I have on my palette, and then I shall be ready."

"Oh, I like prowling about your studio; you must not hurry on my account," and after standing for some minutes, her hand resting on his shoulder, while she looked admiringly at his work, she turned to a side-table and began to look through some portfolios.

He hated himself for the feeling, but it was a certain relief to him when that large, well-shaped hand was withdrawn.

There was a long silence; he painted on, almost forgetful of her presence, and she was at no time talkative merely for the pleasure of hearing the sound of her voice. She had routed out a little dusty portfolio from behind the others, and was turning over its contents. Many of them were familiar to her, they were those of last year at Lyme; she fingered them a little tenderly. And then suddenly she exclaimed, and stood still, looking intently at the small sketch she held in her hands. It was much more finished than the others. Against a background of dark rock a girl's figure stood out, a girl in velvet and soft furs, with a lovely face, a pathetic look of appeal in the blue eyes and about the trembling lips. He must have seen her,

after all, when she held out her hand that time in vain, for certainly that expression of woe was not habitual to Miss Rickards.

"You never showed me this one of Georgie," she said, not turning, for he was close beside her now.

"Did I not?" he answered, and then their eyes met for an instant.

Myra laid the picture down on the table, and went over to the window. She stood there alone for a minute, although it seemed to her much longer, looking down at the busy street far beneath; the little moving figures, the swiftly passing vehicles, all struck her with a strange sense of unreality. What had love or suffering got to do in such a world of pigmies?

"Well, Myra, are you ready?" He had put Georgie away out of sight among the other Lyme sketches, he would forget them all. "Shall we go now?" he repeated, coming to her at the window.

Myra looked perseveringly into the street.

"No," she said gently; "we have changed our minds. I forgot; I came on purpose to tell you I don't want to go to Vincennes." It was the only lie she had ever told him, and she still kept her eyes away from his.

"You do not often change your mind," he said, a little surprised. "I wish I had known a little sooner—at any rate you will let me walk home with you?"

Myra left off looking out of the window and looked at him instead.

"Why do you wish I had told you sooner?" she enquired in her usual direct fashion.

"Oh, only that De Vigne, that artist fellow—I think you have met him here—came in to ask me to go with him to his place at Fontainebleau until Monday; but it does not matter. I was glad of the excuse, Myra—I was indeed," he insisted with his courteous smile.

But Myra apparently thought differently. She jumped at the idea of her lover spending the next two days away from Paris with an alacrity that was scarcely flattering. However, he was not hurt, only a little amused at her eagerness. And, to please her, he went down to his friend's rooms, and found that De Vigne was only too delighted that he should change his mind at the eleventh hour.

And so Myra had her way, and took the fashioning of her life into her own hands in her usual strong-minded manner.

The two friends went off together. The

Frenchman had met Myra once or twice before, and when they said good-bye, standing on the clean white flag-stones, the fiacre that was to convey them to the station waiting for them, he shook hands with her, English fashion.

"Mais elle est superbe! ton Anglaise," he said, settling himself in the carriage, after casting a backward look at Myra's retreating figure. "Ma foi, tu as de la chance."

But his friend was silent; perhaps he resented this openly expressed admiration of his lady-love.

In the meantime Myra, unconscious of the little Frenchman's appreciative remarks, walked back alone.

The park was deserted, the bonnes and their little charges had gone home. The sun was no longer unpleasantly hot; there was just enough left to slant through the trees, making pretty, flickering shadows on the gravel path, and to burnish a stem or bough here and there with gold.

But the girl had no inclination to linger then; there was something to be done, the doing of which would cost her a pang or two. And it was not in Myra's nature to put off anything unpleasant, to weakly shut her eyes and let things take their course. She despised people who let their lives be shaped for them; cost her what it might, she would shape hers. Perhaps it was for the best? Had she not always said that she would live for art, that no man was worthy to take the first place in an intelligent woman's heart? She had been weak, very weak, almost like an ordinary woman—but it was over. She had reached the gate, and turning, looked at the little park for the last time. The sun had set; the trees that had been golden looked grey; the rosy flush had faded from the sky. Yes, it was over.

Mrs. Thompson was consoling herself, in the absence of the afternoon-tea of her heart, with a large cup of chocolate, and, in the absence of her daughter, was indulging in a somewhat dog's-eared French novel, borrowed from the black-eyed, voluble little concierge.

"Oh, Myra!" she said, "I did not expect you back so soon. Where is Paul?"

"I am alone," answered Miss Thompson coldly; it seemed to her her mother had never said "Paul" with such an entire air of appropriation.

"Mother, how soon can you leave Paris

—to-night—to-morrow—when?" was her next startling speech.

The novel slid on to the floor, and Mrs. Thompson sat staring at her daughter in blank astonishment.

"To-night!" she repeated. "Has anything happened? Is Paul——"

"For goodness sake, mother, let us leave Mr. Rentoul out of the question," interrupted Myra almost violently. "We are not staying here for him; I hate the place—I must go away. Oh, mother," suddenly coming over to the sofa and putting her hand on her mother's shoulder, as, one short hour ago, she had laid it on her lover's, "let us go home."

Poor Mrs. Thompson, bewildered, and yet with an instinctive sickening fear that all that was most to be dreaded had come to pass, agreed with her usual meekness to her daughter's new whim, and it was arranged that they were to start on their homeward journey the following night.

Then, and not till then, did Myra feel free to act. She went up to her room, locked the door, and wrote the following letter:

"DEAR MR. RENTOUL,—I am going to be very frank. I don't know that it is very womanly to be frank, but I have always thought it best to say exactly what I think. I am sure that you agree with me in thinking that our engagement is a mistake. I have been very blind, and fear very much that my blindness may have come in some way between you and the woman you love. I will now do my best to repair any unhappiness I may have caused. I could not help reading, perhaps more than you meant me to read, in your face to-day when I was looking at the portrait of Georgie Rickards. When we were at Lyme in the winter, I did not believe that you cared or ever would care for Miss Rickards sufficiently to make her your wife. I told her so. I know, of course, nothing of what may have passed between you, but I think that Miss Rickards may have been influenced by me. I am extremely sorry for the part I have unconsciously played in this chapter of mistakes, and I hope you will not think that it has in any way unfitted us to continue to be friends.—Believe me to remain, very sincerely yours,

"MYRA THOMPSON.

"P.S.—I enclose Mrs. Sparkes's address at Brighton, as you may not have it."

Myra was rather pale when she came

down, her hat still on, for she would trust no one to post that letter but herself.

Her mother met her on the landing, and saw the letter in her hand. There was never the possibility of mistake in Myra's handwriting. She asked no question, but her daughter answered the unspoken enquiry.

"Yes, mother, this is to break off our engagement. And then," still in answer to the enquiring look, "he never loved me."

CHAPTER VI.

MR. RENTOUL did not return to Paris until Monday morning; he found Myra's letter waiting for him. His first feeling was one of intense irritation. It is not pleasant to a man to be thrown over, even by a woman he does not love.

"What nonsense!" he exclaimed angrily. "I did not think she was so childish!" and he went to see her full of all sorts of superior arguments to prove to her her extreme foolishness.

The concierge called after him as he was half-way upstairs.

"Monsieur knows not then that these ladies are gone? Mais oui," as monsieur descended with rather a blank face; "they are gone for England, Saturday at the night."

Here was startling news! He thanked the officious little Frenchwoman who so much preferred talking bad English to her own pretty Parisian French, and walked back again to his rooms. He was already beginning to admire Myra for her rejection of him.

"She is a fine girl," he said to himself, throwing away the end of a cigar he had taken for soothing purposes. And then with a rush his thoughts went back to the other woman.

He took out the little banished portrait which had just played so important a part in his life, and let himself look at it to his heart's fill.

Would Myra have laughed in scorn, or wept for simple pity, could she have seen him kissing that painted piece of cardboard?

Later, he read Myra's letter again, copied the address she gave him into his notebook, and folded up and carefully put away the first and last letter he received from Miss Thompson during their engagement.

He did not leave Paris for nearly three weeks after the Thompsons' flight, and it was late in July before he made use of

the address which, it must be confessed, Myra had found somewhat hard to give him.

Number Twenty-four, Bedford Square. He knew the address by heart, and so filled was he with the thought of that near meeting that he would scarcely have been surprised had Georgie herself opened the door to him. Instead of that, however, a rather slatternly-looking servant informed him that Miss Rickards was not at home.

"Mrs. Sparkes is in, sir," added the girl, seeing his disappointment.

And then it flashed across him that perhaps he ought to have asked for this lady in the first place, as of course she must be Georgie's mother.

He was shown into a dimly-lighted room, smelling rather too strongly, he thought, of perfumery.

Coming in from the glare of the King's Road, he at first could distinguish nothing, but he presently became aware that a black-clad figure with wonderfully golden hair was approaching him.

"Mrs. Sparkes?" he bowed.

She held out a thin white hand, rather overlaid with rings.

"I dare say I ought to know you," she said with a little upward glance of her blue eyes—Georgie's eyes, as he noticed with a sort of pang; "but my memory is so dreadful. Too bad of me, is it not?"

He took her hand.

"You must not be too severe on your memory," he said. "I have never had the pleasure of meeting you before—in fact, I must apologise. The truth is, we—that is to say, I—had the pleasure of meeting your daughter, Miss Rickards, at Lyme Regis in the winter."

It was rather a lame speech, but the tone was courteous and well-bred, and Mrs. Sparkes smiled sweetly. She had sunk back again among her cushions, and with her hands loosely clasped on her lap, was flashing her blue eyes at him.

At first sight she had struck him as looking surprisingly young, but now as he looked at her more critically, he was almost shocked to see, through its coat of enamel, what an old worn face it was; the unnaturally red lips, and vivid golden hair, showed up too plainly the crows' feet round the got-up eyes and the sunken, blue-veined temples.

But she was Georgie's mother, and so there was more pity than disgust in his

face as he sat and received the battery of her smiles and glances.

"Dear Georgie is so fond of the sea," she told him, "and so neglectful of her complexion. She is quite too dreadfully brown; she makes me look altogether ghastly."

Mr. Rentoul was silent; perhaps he was thinking that Georgie's brown complexion could not make that poor, painted face look much more ghastly than it already did.

"Perhaps I may meet Miss Rickards," he said presently; "I am going down to the sea."

But Mrs. Sparkes would not allow him to escape just yet; Georgie would soon be in; he must have some tea; a nice, cosy little afternoon-tea, à deux! And so he stayed and endured another hour of small-talk, which, only owing to a strong determination on one side, did not merge into a flirtation. At six o'clock he did make his escape.

"So odd of Georgie to stay out so late. Of course Susan is with her; but she is very wilful, very peculiar. We have few tastes in common."

Mr. Rentoul refrained from any open expression of thankfulness; he was indeed almost tender in his dealings with the little hand lying so confidingly in his own; he bent over it with old-fashioned courtesy, and touched it with his lips. He left her standing there in the doorway, with her dyed hair and painted face, and with the comfortable feeling that she had been appreciated.

As for him, he felt as if he could not breathe freely until he was out of the house, out of all reach of the scent of perfumery, and of those dazzling smiles. He found himself already making plans to spend much of his married life abroad. He was walking in the direction of Hove, and was presently blessed with a sight of his love, whom indeed he had come to seek; she was coming towards him slowly. She wore a white dress, and there was a quantity of soft lace falling about it; a servant was walking by her side, carrying some books.

She did not see him until he stood almost in front of her, and when he spoke, holding

out his hand, she flushed, and then became very pale.

He sent the maid home with a cool audacity that fairly took Georgie's breath away, but she would not have been a woman had she not liked him all the better for this display of masterfulness.

"Let us go down to the sea," he said gently.

They walked over the loose shingle together, and there to the familiar music of the sea all misunderstanding came to an end.

"You forgive me at last, then?" he asked, smiling. "My darling, how could you have been so unkind?"

"I was horrid," she acknowledged remorsefully. "Do you know what I said. I said——"

But he stopped her.

"No, don't tell me. What does it matter—what does anything matter now?"

Truth to tell, he had so vivid a recollection of his love's capacity for plain-speaking that he would just as soon she did not recommence.

"I must," she whispered. "I cannot be happy unless you know the worst, and that you forgive me. I said you were not a gentleman."

It was such a shamed little voice, that he could not help smiling. He drew her very close to him.

"Is that all? that is not so dreadful; perhaps I am not, who knows? I believe my father made his money selling lamp-oil, or furniture-polish, or something of the sort, and that is not aristocratic exactly, is it? But admitting I am not a gentleman, I am at least an artist, and I love you; is that enough for you, Georgie?"

The girl made no verbal reply, but she raised her face to his, and he read her answer in the eyes that he loved.

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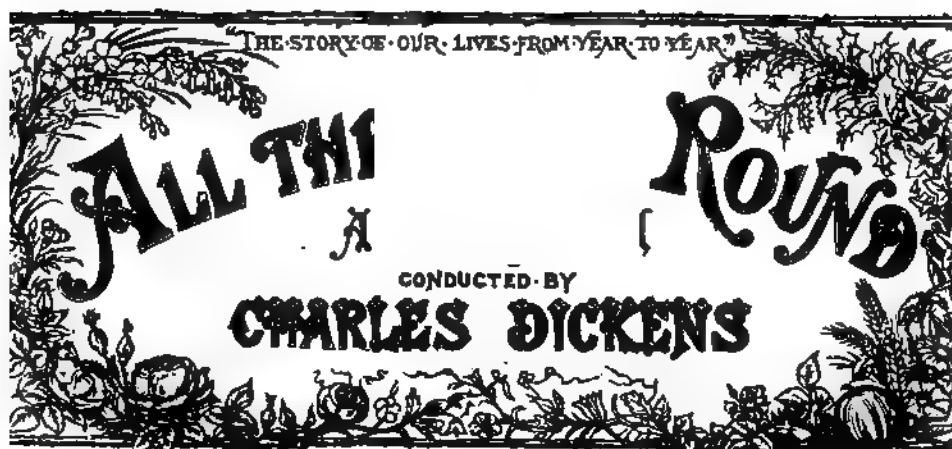
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CHAPTER XXV. FOR EVER.

MRS. BOMPAS felt herself mistress of the situation. She was advancing towards Archie as her own, her long-lost boy, with much maudlin affection in her manner, when he rose to shrink from her so unmistakably that she at once resumed the offensive—the very offensive.

"Oh, we're Mr. Guard, are we? And I'm the dirt under your feet, am I? Me and my daughter to be trampled into the mud of the streets by the likes of you——"

"Ida, this is no place for you, dear; come," said Mrs. John, rising. Her tone cut Archie to the very heart. In all his life he could recall no word of hers that had not been loving and lovingly uttered. He opened the door for them to pass out, but Mrs. Bompas thrust herself forward and filled the doorway with arms akimbo.

"Not till I get back my letter. You shall not leave the room till I get my letter. I shall send for the police."

"Hold your tongue, woman!" cried Archie, exasperated to madness.

"Here is the letter," said Mrs. John, at the same moment, thus diverting the worthy woman from a savage retort upon Archie. She took the letter and sullenly retreated from the doorway. When Mrs. John and Ida had passed out and got clear into another room, Archie stepped into the hall, opened the front door, and called to Mrs. Bompas, who hurried forward with some alacrity, thinking he was about to come to terms with her.

"There's the door, Mrs. Bompas." Then the storm broke, and dirty weather it was. She abused him in Billingsgate, perfectly

audible to Mrs. John and Ida, who, in the study, were clinging together as in a common and crushing bereavement. Archie stood silent, holding the door open, while Mrs. Bompas poured a foul mixture of accusation and abuse upon him, and at its close, as she cooled, declared she had come to give him a chance to make honourable amends to her daughter, but now she would let the law take its course. Finally as she departed, she flourished the packet of letters in his face, declaring she had evidence enough there to get a verdict from any jury in England.

Archie felt that she had, and he knew her too well to doubt her doing what she threatened, if it promised her the least advantage. He was as certain as if the writ had been served upon him, that before long, in court, he would be made the laughing-stock of the world. What did it matter? What did anything matter now? His world was Ida and his mother, and the thought of their scorn seemed to scorch into his brain. And to-day, an hour ago, their love, and such love, had been all his! He had flung himself on his bed with his face buried in the pillow, and the remembrance of the love he had lost paralysed thought. His sun had gone down at noon—dropped into midnight from meridian splendour and his mind staggered about in the sadder blindness, groping helplessly in a world not realised.

He did not know how long he had lain thus, when a knock at the door roused him.

"Archie!"

"Yes, mother."

"May I come in?"

Archie rose, unlocked the door, opened it as in a dream, and stood haggard and stunned, looking years older, before her.

Mrs. John's remorse melted away as

sight of him. For this visit had been a matter of remorse to her. From Archie's letter, and still more from Mrs. Bompas's wild and whirling words, she had gathered that he had committed what, in her eyes, was one of the basest and blackest of all crimes—the betrayal and abandonment of a trusting girl. He had not contradicted the terrible impeachment, nay, its truth was written in guilt and in remorse in his face. Otherwise Mrs. John might well have thought, what any woman in the world would be sure to think, that in this case the daughter of such a creature as Mrs. Bompas was much more likely to have been the seducer than the seduced. But his silence, and his face, and the very misery that wrung her reluctant pity, put the thing beyond doubt.

If then he had done this cruel baseness—and there was no hope that he had not—ought she to treat it as of no account, to condone it, to condole with him upon it? If she could have helped herself, most certainly she would have left Archie to go alone through his wholesome anguish. But she could not help herself. She must go to him, as a doting mother must soothe the pain of the punishment she has inflicted, and almost in the moment of its infliction. But if Mrs. John could not help coming to share his trouble, she could not help either a sense of remorse as though she became thereby an abettor of his guilt.

This remorse, however, as we have said, melted at the sight of the white and blank despair in Archie's face. Setting down hurriedly the tray she had brought him—as he could not have had anything to eat or drink for some hours—she sat down on the nearest chair, covered her face with her hands, and cried almost hysterically, Archie standing the while silent before her.

At last she took her hands from her eyes to look up into his face, as though to read there that it was but a bad dream. And, indeed, there was in his frank, fearless, kindly face an assurance stronger than words that he could not do deliberately a base, and cruel, and cowardly thing.

"Oh, Archie, it is not true—say it is not true—what she said."

"I don't know what she said, mother. She could not have said more than the letters; and you read them. Did—did——"

Here he hesitated. But his mother read his thought.

"Ida? No, of course not. How could you think it? They weren't for her to read."

"They'll be for everyone to read soon."

"For everyone?"

"They'll be in every paper."

"Is she going to send them to the newspapers?" cried Mrs. John, aghast.

She hadn't overheard Mrs. Bompas's final threat of legal proceedings, which was not screamed out as loudly as her abuse.

"She's going to law about it."

"Going to law? To make money out of it!"

"She wants to make a promise to marry out of it."

"But did you mean to marry her?"

"Why, mother, you read the letters."

"I read only one, Archie, and I had no right to read that, dear, but I couldn't help it. But did you really mean to marry her?"

"Oh, I don't know what I meant. I was mad. Yes, I believe I should have married her."

"Oh, Archie!" she exclaimed, rising to fling her arms round him in her relief and in her remorse for having misjudged him, "oh, Archie, I am so glad—I'm so glad! How could I have thought it of you?"

"You couldn't have thought me worse than I was, mother. Yes, I should have been mad enough to marry her, I believe, if she hadn't found out that I was poor, and thrown me over for another fellow."

"But if it was she who gave you up, she's no case, has she?"

Mrs. John's natural shrewdness had been sharpened by constant exercise through doing duty daily for the Rev. John's mind, absent on perpetual leave.

"She didn't give me up. She kept me on, and him on, and half-a-dozen others, I dare say; but I don't suppose any of them were fools enough to put themselves in her power, as I did."

"By those letters? Don't you think she'd sell them?"

Archie threw himself into a seat with a gesture of despair.

"Sell them? Who's to buy them? Hasn't enough of the money you saved and pinched to give me gone to such creatures as these? And all the resolutions I had made, and meant to keep, and would have kept, to be at no more expense to you, to repay you all the expense I had been, to do something, to be something, that you would be proud of, that she—"

She'll never forgive me, mother," looking up despairingly into her face.

"She's terribly shocked, Archie, that you could engage yourself to the daughter of such a woman, and, at the same time, propose to her. She thinks it a just punishment on herself for making and breaking her own engagement so lightly. As if she could have helped either making it or breaking it!"

"She despises me," he groaned.

"Well, Archie," speaking hesitatingly, as breaking bad news, "I don't think she respects you as she did. You couldn't expect it. Of course she didn't suspect what I suspected, for the girl has no more ideas of such things than a baby. But that you should engage yourself to this low woman, and that you should then throw her aside so lightly, and offer her place to Ida!"

"Her place!"

"Or give Ida's place to her; for you told her you had loved her before you could have seen this girl. Oh, Archie! how could you so forget her and forget yourself?"

He walked up and down the room in a frenzy of agitation, and at last stopped suddenly face to face with his mother.

"I've lost her!" he cried miserably.

"I don't know what time may do," she answered doubtfully, and it was plain that this was the utmost she could say.

"Mother, do you think she'd see me?" he asked eagerly, after a pause.

"I don't think, Archie, I should ask her now, she feels so sore and sick at heart. You see, dear," laying her hand soothingly and apologetically upon his arm—"you see, dear, you told her over and over again that you had always loved her alone, and so got her to open out to you her whole heart and all its lifelong love for you, and now she finds you were all the time engaged to this woman."

"All the time! It was only a month's madness; and even through that month I loved Ida hopelessly, but with the only love worthy of the name."

"Yet you'd have married this woman?"

"Mother, you cannot understand—I cannot explain. I was mad, and this girl——"

Here he checked himself. There was much he might have told his mother about Anastasia, which would have gone a good way towards the justification, or at the least, towards the palliation of his conduct, but it would have been to put the whole

blame on the girl, at the cost, moreover, of making himself look ridiculous.

"Well, Archie, I shall do what I can for you with Ida," interpreting his hesitation as a magnanimous reluctance to throw the whole blame (where she was sure it was due) on the girl. "I'm afraid only time can do much—and yourself. You must win back her respect, Archie. Ida's love, more than that of most girls, leans on her respect. She couldn't have loved you as she did, if she hadn't thought as highly of you as she did."

This was true. Ida had canonized Archie, and now her god was proved an idol of clay. And it must be remembered that the girl had no idea of the two kinds of worship, which Archie just now assured his mother had co-existed in his heart. She had no idea of a higher and a lower kind of love, but only of one kind, whose root might be of the earth and in the earth—she never saw it—but whose flower filled her whole life with its incense. This, the sole kind of love she knew, was what she had given Archie, and this was what she thought Archie had given her.

In the full assurance of this belief, she, the most reserved of girls, had laid bare her whole heart to him, and let him see how every beat of it had been his for years! And all these years he had not only cared nothing for her, but had cared for the daughter of this woman! And then his vows, his passionate and repeated protestations that he had loved her alone, always!

The shock was as the shock of an earthquake, in which everything gives and goes together. The very foundations on which her life had rested seemed to slip from beneath her.

To many, Ida's innocence—or ignorance, if you will—must seem unnatural, and her prostration at this discovery of Archie's iniquities incredible. Was she a fool? Or had she never read a novel written by a lady? She was no fool, and she had read novels in which love was represented as something not quite divine, not quite human even; but she had read her own meaning into them. Pitch doesn't defile always; nay, the chemist extracts from it the most exquisite colours; and so, too, Ida gathered honey from the weed.

"I couldn't help going to him," said Mrs. John apologetically, on her return to Ida, sitting forlorn in her own room. "I couldn't help going to him, dear, and I am

glad I went. He's so wretched, and he hasn't behaved as badly as I thought."

"It wasn't true?" gasped Ida, half rising from her seat with an impetuosity startling in her.

"A great deal of it wasn't true."

"He wasn't engaged to her?"

"He was engaged to her, dear, but he was entrapped into the engagement. She was a very designing woman."

"Does he say so?" with a ring of scorn in her voice.

"That's not like you, Ida. Of course he didn't say so; but I inferred it from something he did say."

"Whatever she was, he must have loved her to engage himself to her."

"Loved her in a way."

"Only enough to engage himself to her," bitterly.

"It was a passing fancy, or rather frenzy. You cannot understand it; he can hardly understand it himself now; for now he knows what love really is."

"Since when, Mrs. Pybus? Since last Tuesday?"

"Ida, I do believe he did love you all along," Mrs. John rejoined, in answer to this satiric reference to Archie's protestations of past constancy. "But he despaired of your love, dear, and that made him reckless."

Of course Mrs. John more than half believed this theory herself, or she wouldn't have broached it; but she hardly expected Ida to believe it, or understand it even.

And Ida didn't. She had herself felt the despair of love, and knew in her own case its nature and its effect. It certainly was not to dispose her to love another. It made her shrink with almost abhorrence from the love of another. Still, had not she herself accepted another? This remembrance and remorse kept her silent though unconvinced. At the same time her passive and shrinking acceptance of Dick, under the compulsion of gratitude, was a very different thing from Archie's passionate pursuit of a creature so unworthy, as the daughter of this Mrs. Bompas must be.

This Ida felt, though she did not express it, or expressed it only through a silence which Mrs. John saw from her face was anything but assent.

"Well, Ida dear, time will tell."

"I think it has told, Mrs. Pybus."

"My dear child, you speak always as if you were my age. You should remember, my dear, that, though you were always a woman, he has been but a boy till now.

Now, this trouble has made him a man, and the hope to get your love back will make him a good man—if he may hope. He may, dear, mayn't he?" in a tone of low and pathetic entreaty. "It will make all the difference in his life if you let him hope to get back your love when he shows himself worthy of it."

"My love! I feel as if I had none now to give. I think it's gone. Everything's gone, I think."

Here the girl broke down utterly. Mrs. John, putting both her arms about her, soothed her like a little child with mingled kisses and words of love, till she brought her back at last to comparative calm.

Ida's love was not dead, of course. It was at least alive enough to make her hard and cold as steel to Archie the next morning. It was enough for so reserved and self-respecting a girl to have shown him her heart once with the result of such bitter mortification. Besides, the more she thought of it—and she had all the sleepless night through to think of it—the less could she see any justification, or extenuation even, of Archie's faithlessness. Either his love was worthless, or his vows were worthless. If, as Mrs. John suggested, he could love her and this girl at the same time, what was his love worth? And might not his heart be as easily and equally divided in the future as it had been in the past?

On the other hand, if he could love, and had loved this woman, with his whole heart, what then was the worth of his solemn protestations of past constancy to herself? It was impossible for a girl of so single and sincere a heart as Ida to conceive an escape from this dilemma.

For both these reasons, then—that she still loved Archie, and that she thought him still unworthy of her love—Ida was freezing in her bearing to him the next morning—the last morning of her stay.

He must, of course, see her alone before she left, to make out what case he could for himself, and, after a silent breakfast, Mrs. John left them together.

Ida sat still, cold, white as marble—to all appearances not in the least nervous, though every nerve in her body quivered. Archie, sitting opposite to her, with troubled eyes fixed on her face, sought some encouragement there in vain. The silence grew and deepened till the tension became intolerable, and Archie made at last a plunge of despair.

"Ida, I wanted to see you. I wanted to explain——" A pause. What intelligible explanation had he to give? "I—I think you are under a mistake."

"We have both made a mistake. I think there's no more to say," freezingly.

"There is—there is, Ida, if I could say it; if I could explain. I was mad when I wrote those letters. I didn't know what I said, or what I did. Besides—I cannot explain; but if you knew all I think you would forgive me. I know you would forgive me. You would let me hope—Ida, you will?" He rose as he spoke, and stood before her, and tried to take her hand. She withdrew it and rose also, more to fly from herself than from him.

"I am sorry to give you pain. I owe Mrs. Pybus so much. But you will soon forget it."

She seemed to speak with the utmost deliberation; yet she hardly knew what she said or she would have spoken more generously. Every word, as he interpreted it, was a stab.

"I was not suing you for a debt you owed my mother," he answered bitterly; "nor even for that you gave me yesterday and have forgotten to-day. It is not I who soon forget."

This reference to Ida's confession of her love was most unfortunate. It roused her pride to the reinforcement of her wavering resolution.

"I was mistaken," she said merely, but with a suspicion of scorn in her voice.

"Ida, it is now you mistake me. You will come to think so yet. I shall not give up that hope; I cannot. It is my life. I shall live in the hope that if I prove myself what you once thought me, you will be to me again all that you were. Now, I ask you only to wait and to think of me as kindly as you can." Here he paused, but Ida remained silent also for a moment, and then said:

"I have so much kindness to thank you for, that I cannot think otherwise of you; but as to our engagement, it is best there should be no misunderstanding that it is at an end."

"For ever?" piteously.

"For ever," in a low and tremulous voice.

In another moment she would have broken down, and Archie might have read his reprieve in her tears, and wrung it from her lips, if the fear of such a self-betrayal had not hurried her from the room. Hurried her? No. She turned hurriedly

from him, but walked to the door with her usual calm stateliness, and not till it was closed behind her did she fly, as from herself, to her room, to lock herself in alone with her misery, excluding even Mrs. John.

It would be hard to say which of the two had the more wretched hour; nor was their trouble lessened by the thought that they had brought it upon themselves—for Ida also felt that it was in some sense self-inflicted. But what could she have done? Had she answered Archie's piteous appeal otherwise, it would have been simply to make over again a confession of her love.

She was not the girl to wear her heart upon her sleeve a second time, to feed this youth's reckless vanity.

CHRONICLES OF ENGLISH COUNTIES.

SHROPSHIRE. PART II.

WHEN the lion and the unicorn, as the old ditty has it, were fighting for the crown, and axe and sword were thinning the ranks of the feudal nobility, even among the storm and stress of civil war and commotion, the civic life of our English towns had developed to its fullest life of picturesqueness and dignity. And thus old Shrewsbury, towards the close of the turbid, tumultuous fifteenth century, shows forth with a pomp of civic pride that impresses the imagination. All the picturesque elements of the mediæval days, which were coming to an end, were tinged with the colour and brightness of the dawning renaissance. The walls that surrounded the city, the massive towers, and grass-grown ramparts with the cannon peering from the battlements, gave an element of compactness and security; and the narrow streets, with the tall, overhanging timber-houses, afforded vistas of chequered light, and deep and gloomy shadows in which the gleam of arms and the glow of rich trappings found an appropriate setting. There stood the grand old abbey, with its wealth of monuments and shrines, the friaries with their brethren of the cowl, whose gowns of black and grey gave a foil and contrast to the civic state of the citizens and the gay apparel of the citizens' wives. With all this was a constant dramatic change of incident and personage, now a nobleman marching to the scaffold, again a king entering in the pomp of his power.

The greatest day of the year in old

Shrewsbury was the feast of Corpus Christi, which still stirs old-fashioned Norman towns to a pageantry that recalls the old English life that has passed away. Then would all the houses be festooned with hangings—rich silk and cloth of gold for the wealthy, and the household store of bleached linen, white and radiant, for the rest—while the procession slowly filed through the narrow streets, the great golden crozier in front, and the Lord Abbot, under a silken canopy, bearing in his hands the jewelled Pyx. Followed him all the brotherhood, prior and chamberlain, treasurer and sacrist, in all the dignity of violet and gold, the humble friars in their coarse gowns and sandals, the mayor and the elders of the town, and the guilds with their brave banners and quaint emblems. At every step the silver censers swayed and swung, and through the smoke of incense over a path of flowers and twigs the procession advanced till halting at some temporary altar, adorned with all the silver vessels and rich plate of some solid citizen and his friends, the jewelled Pyx would be raised, and all the assemblage would fall on their knees before it—richly caparisoned knights with bright armour gleaming beneath silken trappings, beggars in their rags, the venerable citizens, the urchins from St. Peter's School, the little girls in white or blue, with their aprons full of flowers—while the cannon sounded from the walls, and the bells rang in volleys from all the church-towers.

Such was old Shrewsbury, in 1485, the year following that which had seen the Duke of Buckingham's execution on the tall scaffold before the high cross in Shrewsbury market-place. After that high-handed exertion of kingly power, people felt that Richard's crown sat secure upon his brows. Some, here and there, might grieve for the hapless fate of the young princes in the Tower, and prophesy in secret that no good could come of a reign so inaugurated—

Things bad begun make strong themselves by ill ; but the general sentiment acknowledged the want of a strong ruler, and the terrible evils which had followed a long minority, when first one set of rapacious nobles, and then another, ruled the destinies of the country, were still fresh in men's minds.

Woe to that land that's governed by a child, says one of Shakespeare's citizens in Richard the Third. And it might well be the general feeling among the commonalty and the citizens of the chief towns of

the kingdom, that they owed a hearty acquiescence to a ruler who had saved the country from such a dangerous pass. And yet all this time the end of the king was prepared. A keen and strong-minded woman had pitted herself against Richard with his vigorous genius, and the woman was destined to triumph. This woman was Margaret, the mother of Henry, the young Earl of Richmond, at that time an exile in France. Margaret was of the blood of the Beauforts, the descendants of John of Gaunt and Catharine Swynford, and her son was the last representative of the house of Lancaster, although he held as much to the line of Valois as to that of Plantagenet, and was rather a Welshman than either through his ancestor Owen Tudor. The Welsh descent of the prince proved a strong point in his favour. All along the line of the Welsh coast the emissaries of the young pretender to the throne found shelter and welcome ; and when the moment of action arrived, the flotilla of the young prince found a safe and friendly harbour in Wales, protected from all danger of surprise by the bulwark of a whole nation. The Welsh, it may be judged, went solidly for their countryman, and all the future king's cousins, many of them but simple farmers and cattle dealers, but all with the pride and long pedigree of their race, formed useful agents and recruits. And then Margaret had been busy among the great families of the land, uneasy at the new state of things : a popular king depending upon the commonalty and citizens, and sending great nobles to the block with a word. Margaret had married, no doubt with strategical motives directed to this very issue, Lord Stanley, whose power in the districts of Lancashire and Cheshire was sufficient to have seriously threatened any advance on the part of the invaders beyond the Welsh mountains, while the Talbots had been gained over by Margaret's subtle influence, a family which could raise in Shropshire itself between two and three thousand fighting men.

But of all this plot the men of Shrewsbury can have known little, and must have been rather astonished, one day in August, to see a strong mixed force of armed men marching from the side of Wales towards their gates. The strong castle of Shrewsbury was then held for the king by a Mytton, one of a Shropshire family noted for a vigorous and eccentric individuality down to our own times. When the heralds in advance of the little army demanded that

gates should be opened and drawbridges lowered to receive his majesty, King Henry the Seventh of England and Wales, the bailiff stoutly replied that he knew of no king but King Richard, who had given him this charge, and he swore a great oath that if any entered the place it must be over his (the bailiff's) body. But these brave words were changed for excuses when the bailiff saw that all the great people of the country round were coming in to greet the newly-arrived prince, and then Bailiff Mytton at once fulfilled the terms of his oath, and paid acceptable homage to the now rising sun, by prostrating himself before Henry and requesting the prince to make a stepping-stone of his body. And so the king entered the gates of old Shrewsbury amid the joyous shouts of the Welsh, who saw in this the fulfilment of the ancient prophecies of Merlin and Taliesin that one day the sovereignty of Britain should come back to the British nation :

No more our long-lost Arthur we bewail.
All hail, ye genuine kings, Britannia's issue,
hail !

The prince's army soon passed on to meet Richard, who was mustering his array at Nottingham; but the mixed assemblage—Bretons, Normans, French, and wild Welshmen from the hills—had left behind them an evil legacy in the shape of a terrible plague which devastated the town and afterwards spread over the country under the name of the sweating sickness.

The Tudors had given place to the Stuarts, the Welsh to the Scotch, before Shrewsbury again became a place of historic importance. And, in the meantime, what changes in the old place ! The abbey was a ruin, and only a fragment of its church still remained; the monks and friars had been replaced by Presbyterian and Independent preachers. When Charles the First, after raising his standard at Nottingham, made Shrewsbury his headquarters, he found a community strongly divided in opinion as to the merits of his cause. However, he found the castle on its commanding rock strong and well fortified. The walls were put in a state of defence, and a mint was established, in which, as fast as the loyal people of the country brought in their silver plate, it was turned into coin and devoted to the expenses of the war. But while the Royal cause was dependent on these casual and trivial

sources, the Parliament had all the machinery of taxation at its disposal, and levied its assessments with all the regularity of peaceful times—sometimes even from districts which were actually occupied by the king's troops.

In Shropshire itself there was a strong party for the Parliament, at the head of which was Colonel Mytton, a descendant, no doubt, of the stout bailiff or sheriff of other days. Mytton was member for Shrewsbury in the Long Parliament, and even if he no longer retained the confidence of his constituents, they had no chance of a bye-election in which to express their opinion. In fact, the colonel was in command of a hostile garrison at Wem, about eleven miles to the northwards of Shrewsbury, scheming how he could best pay a visit to his constituents. He had beaten off several attacks from the king's garrison, and presently judged that the time was ripe for reprisals.

On a dark winter's night the colonel set out from Wem with about two hundred and fifty foot and as many horse, and they marched secretly and silently along the highway, till they came in sight of the lights that burned here and there in guard-room and bivouac within the lines of Shrewsbury. The attempt to surprise a place so strongly guarded seemed foolhardy in the extreme; but, possibly, the Parliamentarians had a secret intelligence with some one within the walls which made the enterprise less desperate than it looked.

The site of Shrewsbury, almost encircled by the river, is protected at the neck of the isthmus by the bold brown rock on which stands the castle, whose ancient strength may be judged from its present remains; and the space between rock and river, where the road from Wem entered the town, was guarded by a strong palisade in front of the old city gate. Happily for the Parliamentary troops, they were rich in artisans, and eight undaunted men, accustomed to wield hammer and saw as well as pike and musket, had already volunteered as a kind of forlorn hope. A boat was obtained and rowed quietly up the stream, when the eight men disembarked on the inner side of the palisade and began to saw and hack at the barrier. The sentinels, puzzled at first, and perhaps thinking that here were men employed by their own engineers, at length fired upon the carpenters, and the alarm was given. But in the meantime a prac-

ticable breach had been made, Mytton's dismounted troopers stormed in, their preacher, the Rev. Mr. Huson, among the first, the infantry followed, and all rushed for the market-place, where the main guard was stationed, who all were made prisoners before they had recovered from their bewilderment; the other posts were seized in like manner; and as daylight came the Parliamentarians were in undisputed possession of all the town. The castle, indeed, still held out, but made only a faint resistance, and surrendered before noon. The governor, however, refused quarter, and died sword in hand, but the lieutenant-governor escaped, to join the Royal forces, and was thereupon tried by court-martial soon after, and hanged for negligence and cowardice.

Another victim of the siege of Shrewsbury, according to local tradition, was a certain Colonel Benbow, who having deserted the Parliament for the King, was shot on the green before the castle. The Benbows had once been citizens of importance in the town, but had lost all their substance either by their loyalty or their improvidence, and the nephew of the victim of the Civil War was apprenticed to a mariner who traded from the port of Bristol. Young Benbow, either by marrying his master's daughter, or by other recognised means of promotion, came in time to command a vessel for himself, and in 1686 we find him in command of the Benbow frigate, an armed trader, not bearing the king's commission, but an awkward customer to tackle for all that. On her voyage the ship was attacked by a Saltee rover. Benbow fought his ship gallantly, and when the Moors ran aboard him and swarmed upon his deck, he and his men beat them off and killed thirteen of the pirates. The heads of his fallen enemies Benbow ordered to be cut off and thrown into a tub of pork-pickle, intending them perhaps as an ornament for his cottage home in England. But on his entering the port of Cadiz, the Spanish officials overhauled the ship, and suspecting contraband in the carefully headed-up cask, broke it open, and discovered Benbow's grisly trophies. The fame of this discovery reached the King of Spain, who, delighted with Benbow's courage and modesty, recommended the sailor to the notice of his own King James. The English king gave Benbow a commission in the royal navy, and Benbow won his way, by sheer courage and perseverance, to the command

of a squadron. And in 1702, in a sea-fight with French and Spaniards, Benbow beat off a superior force and held the sea, although deserted by the captains of his own fleet. His leg was cut off by a cannon-ball, but Benbow still kept on deck and gave orders to his seamen; a circumstance commemorated in many popular ballads.

In its existing state Shrewsbury still retains much of its ancient aspect. With all its vicissitudes the town has never suffered seriously from fire—that great enemy of antiquity which sooner or later devours the relics that time has spared. And so the town has many ancient houses, and quaint narrow streets, and picturesque vistas. Remains may, perhaps, still be discovered of the ancient mansion or palace of the Welsh Princes of Powys, whose heiress in the thirteenth century married a Norman, one John de Charlton. The old mansion of the Charltons afterwards was turned into a theatre, and here in the palmy days of the provincial stage, the Shakespearian drama was always welcomed, especially the First Part of Henry the Fourth, when Falstaff's speech, "We fought a long hour by Shrewsbury clock," was sure to bring down the house. The clock in question, to whose solemn chime Shakespeare himself may have listened, is no doubt that on the great western tower of the abbey church; and the old nave of the abbey church is still impressive with its solemn Norman arches, and huge, round, squat columns. The church narrowly escaped being made a cathedral in the days of the Reformation, when Dr. Bouchier, the last abbot of Leicester, was actually nominated to the see, but the proceeds of the vast possessions of the monasteries had been spent before the scheme was perfected.

On the ruins of the ancient college of St. Peter's, which came to an end with the abbey that supported it, rose the celebrated grammar-school of Shrewsbury, which, with its rich endowments and renown for scholarship, holds high place among the great public schools of the country. The quaint Jacobean quadrangle has seen full many a sprightly race of schoolboys pass out into the great world, where many have held their places with honour—none so generally distinguished perhaps as one of the earlier scholars of the foundation, the brilliant Sir Philip Sidney, while few have been more notorious than the typical bad boy of the school, the infamous Judge Jeffreys.

We may leave Shrewsbury either by the Welsh or English bridge, both of them handsome structures of the eighteenth century. By the former we shall soon reach the Welsh borders, with little of interest on the way unless we turn aside at Westbury to visit the ruins of Caux Castle, an ancient border fortress, built by the Corbets, whose mound affords a fine view of all the country round. In the name of this castle we have a curious reminder of the pleasant Norman country, the original home of the founders of the castle. For the Corbets were anciently De Caux, from their possessions in the Pays de Caux, the land whose white cliffs glitter over the sea between Havre and Dieppe, and they named their castle, Caux Castle, after their fatherland. The name Caux suggested Corbeau, and the family losing sight of the original meaning of the word, adopted the raven as their crest, and became known as Corbet—are still known, indeed, as an influential family in the county which takes its share with the Myttons in local celebrity and sporting traditions.

From this point northwards along the border, there is only Oswestry to require any particular mention, a town whose name embodies a morsel of early history. It is Oswald's town, called after the old Northumbrian King so dear to popular tradition as St. Oswald, who here met his fate in a battle with the fierce heathen Penda, of the Mercians. A memory this that carries us away from this pleasant pretty country to Oswald's fortress town on the stern Northumbrian coast, where Bamborough frowns over the northern seas. The scene of the battle may probably be looked for in the meadows about the town. Old Oswestry, a fine ancient earthwork, was probably only a British stronghold, and the Welsh, whose nomenclature may generally be trusted, do not connect the place with Oswald, but call it *Caer Ogyrfau*. There are only slight remains of Oswestry Castle, which was built by the Fitzalans, a family which is reasonably supposed to have furnished the Steward of Scotland, who founded the royal line of Stuart.

More lasting after all than the strong stone castles of the Normans, the earthworks of earlier races are thickly studded everywhere in this debateable land, while the names of places, now Welsh, now English, and now an undistinguishable corruption of one or the other, show how

the border-line has wavered to and fro. Selattyn may be either Welsh or English, and Gobowen, which is clearly Welsh, but not a pleasing specimen, may be matched with Porkington, which has a truly Saxon intonation. Offa's Dyke and Watt's Dyke are still to be traced over field and moorland; of the meaning of which, with all our modern research, we know about as much as did Poet Churchward of Queen Elizabeth's days—a Shropshire worthy he, by the way—who writes :

There is a famous thing
Calde Offaes Dyke, that reacheth farre in length.

Wat's Dyke, likewise, about the same was set,
Between which two both Danes and Britons met,
And traffuke still; but passing boundes by sleight,
The one did take the other prisoner straight.

Another of these border towns is Ellesmere, among a nest of small lakes, which once boasted a strong royal castle, on a commanding brow. The castle is gone, but the castle hill commands a noble view over portions, it is said, of nine adjacent counties. Whitchurch, near the Cheshire border, a cheerful little modern town, had also its strong castle, and its church contains the bones of the famous John Talbot, the scourge of the French.

Where is the great Alcides of the field,
Valiant lord Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury,
Knight of the noble order of St. George,
Worthy St. Michael and the Golden Fleece,
Great Mareschal to Henry the Sixth,
Of all his wars within the realm of France?

Well, here he lies, while a battered effigy, which hardly retains a semblance of form or feature, is all that remains of the once proud monument that recited his honours and achievements.

From Whitchurch the road, alike with rail and river, makes through the centre of the county, with fine parks and pleasant scenery, but no great centres of interest. We must cross Watling Street again—at Wellington, we will say, where the town has taken its name from the street, having originally been Watling town. And here, near the Staffordshire border, we have Shifnall, an ancient little town of the industrial kind, with furnaces and mines all about; and close by is Tong, with its castle, and then on the very verge of the county, Boscobel, with its famous royal oak.

There is a foreign ring about the name of Boscobel which is rather puzzling till we find the reason of it. It seems that one John Giffard built this house among the woods, some time in the reign of the first James, when foreign influences had begun

to be felt among the English gentry, and the courtier fashions of France and Italy were leavening the boisterous hospitality native to the soil. At the house-warming feast, one of the guests, Sir Basil Brooke, of Madeley Court, having just returned from Italy, named the house Boscobello or Fairwood, which happy name was forthwith adopted by acclamation. The Giffards were staunch Roman Catholics, and Boscobel was partly designed as a refuge and hiding-place for such of their communion as were in danger. Surrounded by woods, and at a distance from any main-road, the very existence of the place was little known out of the immediate neighbourhood. The wooden framework of the house was in places made double, with a secret chamber between, and other less commodious hiding-places were contrived between the joists of the flooring. During the civil wars the house had sheltered sundry Cavaliers in their progress from camp to camp, and although long unoccupied by its proprietors, the place was looked after by trusty servants well affected to the right cause.

Thus, when Lord Derby, a fugitive from his own county of Lancaster, struck across the country to join his royal master, who was marching southwards with his Scotch allies, he found lodging and concealment on his dangerous way at Boscobel; and when Charles, after the lost battle of Worcester, found himself a fugitive amid a hostile population, Lord Derby, who rode with him, suggested this house at Boscobel as an excellent hiding-place during the first heat of pursuit. Lord Derby guided the King to the place, and then, with a fine sense of loyalty, rode on to his doom, for a more prudent man would have kept the hiding-place for his own use, and left the King to shift for himself.

At Boscobel Charles found faithful servants ready to help in his escape. He slept one night in the priest's cupboard, and part of one day he spent among the branches of an oak-tree that grew in the midst of dense underwood. Cromwell's troopers were riding up and down the open tracks in the woods, and voices could be heard occasionally as of persons approaching; but it was yet early in September; the trees were still in full leaf, while patches here and there of the russet tinge of autumn bewildered the eyes of the searchers. The way of escape which first suggested itself was down the Severn to Bristol, there to take shipping; but it

was feared that there was little chance of avoiding recognition in that nest of malignants. From one country house to another, sometimes disguised as a woman, sometimes as a groom riding with his mistress behind on a pillion, Charles was guided to the coast of Dorset. At Charmouth he narrowly escaped capture. His horse had cast a shoe, and was taken to the village blacksmith. "This horse has but three shoes," said the smith, "and they were all set in different counties, and one in Worcestershire." The hostler put this and that together, and told his suspicion to the minister of the place, one Mr. Westley—the ancestor, it seems, of the celebrated founder of Methodism—and the minister did his best to stop the King. However, Charles managed to get away, and over the downs to Brighton, where he found honest Captain Tattersal, who took the king on board his vessel at Shoreham. And it was noted that at the very hour when Charles, his troubles over, was gaily sailing over a sunny sea, his faithful servant, Lord Derby, was standing on the scaffold in Bolton market-place.

Boscobel is still standing in very much its ancient state, and, with its oak, is one of the show-places of the district, although, perhaps, the fervid interest with which it was once regarded has a good deal abated. The faithful servitors who did so much for Charles were not forgotten at the Restoration. Richard Penderil, or Trusty Dick as he was called, was entertained at court, and a handsome rent-charge was settled upon the family, which, it seems, there are descendants still left to claim.

Striking across country to the Severn valley again, and passing by the coal and iron districts of Coalbrook Dale and Ironbridge, we come to the pleasant town of Bridgenorth, famed, like Pisa, for its leaning tower. The noble red sandstone rock, on which the castle and the upper part of the town are built, seems to mark the place for a stronghold commanding the course of the river, while caverns, cellars, and dwellings hollowed in the rock, appear to testify to the existence of an earlier race of inhabitants, who had a fancy for cave dwellings. As a Saxon settlement it clearly owed its importance to its bridge over the Severn, which may have been built by the Romans originally, and the town might very well have happened to have been called Bruges, as the name is sometimes spelt in old charters, only that the more important part of the town, on

the Welsh side of the river, was called Brugge, north, to distinguish it from the lower town. The busy Ethelfleda, the "virgo virago" of the old chronicler, left her mark here, in the fortress she raised against the Danes, although it is generally thought that her "burg" was not on the site of the castle rock, but on a partly artificial mount, known by the curious name of Panpudding Hill. Some modern antiquaries might see in this last name traces of the "ing," or mark of the Panpuddas, but a more natural explanation is to be sought in the shape of the hill, which may be held to resemble a pudding, well risen, baked in a round pan. Anyhow the great Norman chieftain, Roger of Montgomery, speedily utilised the great rock for a strong castle, which, like Shrewsbury, more than once sustained a siege against the kingly power. The first siege, by Henry the First, when the castle held out for wicked Robert of Belême, is noticeable for the stand made by the native English against the Norman nobles. The great Norman chiefs were reluctant to press a brother in arms to extremity. But the English fighting men assembled to the number of three thousand, and thus addressed the King: "Sir King, regard not what these traitors say. We will support you, and never leave you till your foe is brought alive or dead to your feet." And the English were as good as their word, and from that time forth the rapacity and lawlessness of the great barons were sensibly checked.

The second siege of Bridgenorth was when Roger de Mortimer, a strong adherent of the late king, Stephen, held King Henry the Second at bay from the trilateral defended by his three castles, Wigmore, Cleobury, and Brug or Bridgenorth. Cleobury was soon taken and destroyed, but Brug held out for more than two months, and Henry narrowly escaped death by an arrow from its walls. Thomas à Becket was present at this siege, for his signature is found attached to documents which are dated from the siege of Brug.

Town and castle, too, stood out stoutly in later days for King Charles. When the town was stormed the garrison retreated to the castle, pursued, it is said, by showers of missiles from the inhabitants, who were mostly for the Parliament, and the governor, either in revenge for this treatment or to aid his defence, set the town on fire, so that it was almost entirely destroyed. The castle was carried at last

by sap and mine; and to this we owe the leaning tower which remains as a solitary witness to the storm and stress of those evil days. Evil days for Bridgenorth at least, which was long in recovering from the destruction wrought upon it.

The town began to look up with the increase of trade and manufacture in the north, when it became a port, whence the cloths of Lancashire and the pottery of Staffordshire were conveyed to Bristol. But although poor Bridgenorth can no longer attempt to vie with Liverpool as a shipping centre, yet it enjoys a certain snug prosperity of its own, and may still point with pride to the opinion of King Charles the First, who was eminently a man of taste, that it was one of the pleasantest places in his dominions.

SIR WILLIAM DOUGLAS.

"SIR WILLIAM DOUGLAS;" nothing more, carved on the old grey stone,
Deep in the lush green boskage, by lichens overgrown.

"Sir William Douglas." Quietly the good knight lies asleep,
Where the great oaks, like sentinels, their watch around him keep.

There in the flush of spring-time, the primrose stars the grass,
And the wild birds on the hawthorn light, as to their nests they pass.

There in the golden summer eves, the lingering lovers come,
And tell the sweet old story, as they rest beside his tomb.

There fall the leaves of autumn, all russet, gold, and red,
And, like a monarch's jewelled robe, bedeck his lonely bed.

And when the wind of winter, the wood around him rocks,
And deepens to an angry roar, the babble of the Brox,

Wide sweeping from their mountain-home, the whirlwinds of the north,
Lash into leaping, tossing foam, the glittering waves of Forth,

That crash upon the fair green Links, and thunder faint and far,
Where from its height the massive Hold looks down upon Dunbar.

Yet undisturbed the soldier lies, while the seasons come and go,
While the roses laugh at Broxmouth, or the Lomonds couch in snow.

And no man knows his story—if he fell in fray forgot,
Where in the wild hill passes, Elliott met Ker or Scott.

Or in the furious battle, where Dunse looks grimly down,
Where on the storied plain below, the Stuart staked his crown;

When, urged by fool and fanatic, brave Leslie left his stand,
And Cromwell sternly smiled to see his foemen "in his hand:"

Dying for king and country, as die a Douglas
 should?
 None know, for very silently he lies in Broxmouth
 wood.
 And only strangers tracking the ferny paths
 alone,
 Pause, to muse a wondering moment, on a name,
 and on a stone.

TRAVELS IN THE EAST.

PART V.

LEAVING the owner of the "'armonium" in her rickety old dwelling, with the expression of a hope that a sudden puff of wind—not to contemplate an earthquake—might not bring it tumbling down about her ears, we went upon our way through the wilds of the far East. A few minutes' brisk walking brought us to the foot of a little flight of stairs, which we proceeded to ascend for a dozen feet or so, until, on entering a small room, we found ourselves in presence of a neat little old lady, whose hair was nearly white, and who was sitting hard at work.

Everything about the chamber looked most scrupulously clean, forming a marked contrast to the house we had just left. Fully one half of the floor was covered by the bedstead, and a tiny strip of carpet was laid upon the rest. The bare boards, where revealed, appeared as though the scrubbing-brush were not a chance acquaintance, but a constant friend and visitor. Equally well scrubbed was the top of the small table which stood beneath the window, and which, except the bedstead, and no fewer than seven chairs, was all the furniture displayed. The number of these chairs a little puzzled me at first, for I had learned that the only other dweller in the room was another neat old lady, who was out in quest of work. But overhearing a stage-whisper about certain "better days," and a husband who had charge of "fifteen hundred lamps" (whereof that of Aladdin, alas! had not been one), I concluded that the chairs were kept as relics of the past, and possibly at midnight were filled by a select society of ghosts.

A tiny fire was flickering in a tidily-kept grate—the spelling of the last word must be carefully attended to, for the adjective would be completely out of place. So very little heat was engendered by the process that the fire appeared to flicker merely for form's sake. The amount of coal expended at that slow rate of consumption could hardly have exceeded a farthing's-worth a day. A small kettle stood silent by the side of the small fire;

indeed, thrice the heat emitted could have scarcely made it sing. In front, by way of hearthrug, lay a solemn-looking cat, who appeared, like his old mistress, to be saddened by the memory of departed better days. By way of decoration, he wore a bright brass collar, which had probably been saved when the fortunes of the family had been untimely wrecked. Excepting the worn wedding-ring adorning the old lady, the cat's collar was the only ornament or jewellery displayed in the apartment, or upon the person of either of its inmates.

"Ah," sighed the old lady, "I wasn't born like this, you know," and her statement, taken literally, must have been quite true. "I've lived like a lady," she continued rather sadly, "for I kept a servant once." This she added as a proof of her ladylike existence, and to show us what high altitude her rank had once attained. She still kept up her old position in society, and abstained from the word "sir" when she addressed me or my guide. She claimed plainly some distinction from the poor folk who lived near her, at whom, indeed, I fancy I detected a slight shadow of a sneer, when I tried to compliment her on the cleanness of her room. "Ah yes," she replied with a smile of satisfaction, "you see I've always been brought up to it. When I kept my servant I was always used to seeing things kept nice, and clean, and tidy. I could never live in a litter as those poor people do, you know."

Those poor people! Poor old lady! And she, perhaps, among the poorest of the poor, and daily working her old fingers to the bone that she might live. But who could smile at her small vanity, in the sight of her sad poverty and the terrible privation which appeared so bravely borne! And who could help admiring her persevering cleanliness, and tidiness, and neatness, in all the trial and the trouble of her sorely fallen fortune and her sadly faded life! Surely, in despite of all the darkness of her days, she had set a bright example to some of "those poor people" who appear to hold that poverty must be allied with dirt, and that they must be slovenly because they are not rich.

Fallen from her high estate, wherein she kept a servant, and had been mated to the keeper of fifteen hundred lamps—the provider of enlightenment, if not himself a brilliant man—the old lady, while she prattled, kept her needle briskly going, and her white hairs low bowed down over

a coarse but clean blue shirt. Such garments it was now her fate to "finish," as she phrased it—a process which involved the cutting and the stitching of half-a-dozen button-holes, the sewing on of seven buttons, and the final stitching of a pair of flaps and cuffs. A farthing a shirt was all the wages she received; but even this was not all profit, for there had to be deducted the cost of the cotton, whereof a penny reel was barely sufficient for the finishing of four-and-twenty shirts. By working pretty hard for fourteen hours at a sitting, she could contrive to finish, say, two dozen in the day, and the rent she and her friend (who was a single lady still, and had likewise seen better days) were forced to pay for their small room, was just defrayed by finishing ten dozen every week. Thus the labour of five days of fourteen hours work apiece was entirely devoted to the sum due to the landlord, in so far as one of the two workers was concerned, and on her remnant of the work, and on the week's work of the other, the pair of poor old ladies were dependent for their clothing, and their firing, and their food.

There were three other small rooms in the house which these old ladies had honoured by their residence; and each of these small rooms was separately tenanted, and, indeed, might truly be regarded as a home. All the occupants were absent, excepting a stray child or so, too small to seek for work; but a peep into their rooms sufficed to prove that the old ladies were unrivalled in possession of a clean and tidy home.

Desirous of a contrast, I bethought me of a dustman, whose home perhaps might indicate his trade, and possibly show traces of the dirt wherewith he dwelt. As a cobbler's wife proverbially seldom goes well shod, so a dustman's wife might rarely see her room undimmed by dust. Moreover, I had heard in my youth a comic story about a dustman whose profession, I remember, was made to rhyme with "fust man," to whom—i.e., to Adam—his pedigree was briefly, but ingeniously traced. By a sudden freak of memory the refrain of this old ditty flashed across my mind, and I felt impelled to ask if there were dustmen in the neighbourhood, that I might visit the abode of one, and make a mental note of what was comical about it.

My wish was granted as readily as a whim is in a fairy-tale. Without the aid of any magical appliance for our transport, such, for instance, as the moving-carpet of

Prince Ahmed, half-a-dozen minutes after quitting the poor shirt-maker sufficed to bring us to the dwelling whereof I was in quest. It stood at the far end of a filthy cul de sac, which formed a little outlet from a rather narrow street; the beauty of whose aspect was not rendered more attractive by a quantity of clothes'-lines, whereon were dangling sundry garments which hardly looked much cleaner for having been to the wash. One side of the court, which bore a royal title, comprised some six or seven extremely shabby tenements—they really seemed too small to be spoken of as houses—while in the middle of the other stood a rusty iron post, which proved, upon a nearer view, to be a dirty pump. This was flanked to right and left by sundry little squares of brickwork, whose chief purpose seemed to be the emission of bad smells. In some of these small out-buildings lay a little heap of cinders or a lump or two of coal; and in the corners there were gathered a few useless odds and ends, which might have well been shot as rubbish on the dust-heap that was near, although then hidden from our sight. As we were afterwards informed, all the dwellers in the court threw their dirt into one dust-bin; and this being used in common by two score or so of people, and very seldom emptied more than twice a month, perhaps it was no wonder that by following our noses we soon found out its whereabouts, and were able to acknowledge that it really seemed to focus all the foul smells of the court.

On the loose and broken tiles which formed the roof of these out-buildings, sat an evil-eyed, torn-eared, and mangy-looking cat. Pointing "the pleased ear," or, at any rate, its tatters, and wagging "the expectant tail," as well as could be wished in its abbreviated state, he looked wistfully at somebody, who probably was eating something, in a room which was just level with the roof whereon he sat. Presently this somebody, invisible to us, through a broken pane of glass pitched a small piece of potato, which with great alacrity was pounced on by poor puss. He instantly was joined by two other torn-eared cats, whose coats sadly wanted brushing, and whose general appearance showed a life much out of luck. Another morsel of potato being chucked out on the roof, there ensued forthwith the freest of free feline fights for its possession, and we were left to fancy what a battle would ensue were a pennyworth of cat's-meat thrown

before the combatants, who clearly found it difficult in that poorly-feeding district to save themselves from starving by the few mice they could catch.

Of the Home of the Happy Dustman (happy because exempt by law from Sunday labour) a pretty picture might be made for a pious magazine; but I shall not attempt to draw upon my fancy for any such a work. The sketch I here present was made upon the spot, and though some few minor details may have escaped my notice, the points of special picturesqueness have been faithfully preserved. I abstain from highly colouring the plain pencilling I made, and from blackening the description by extra work with pen and ink.

The door of the house was open, and the door of the room likewise, which was on the ground-floor, there being one floor over it. This room—of ten feet square, say—formed the Happy Dustman's Home, and gave shelter to his wife and two young dustmen of the future, who at present were small boys. In the doorway stood a woman of about four or five and fifty, somewhat frowsy and ill-favoured, who, although the doors were open, did not bid us come in. On the contrary, indeed, she did her best to keep us out, alleging as a reason that the place was "in a litter," which recalled to me the literary dustman of the song. She likewise urged as her excuse that she was "tidyin' up a bit," for her daughter was engaged in working at "the 'Eaps." We said politely that we were sorry for the absence of the lady; but that, though we were denied the pleasure of her company, we hoped we might enjoy the privilege of entrance to her room. This at length was granted with a grunt, which might have been mistaken for a negative reply to our request. But we construed the sound otherwise, and passed the threshold of the home, with a promise to make due excuse for its untidy state. "You see," said the old woman, "she lef' it in a litter, bein' a bit 'urried like for gettin' to the 'Eaps," and, indeed, throughout the conversation which ensued, continual hints were dropped about the litter being "temp'ry," and soon to be set right by the task of "tidying up."

Tidying up! Well, yes. It clearly was not quite a needless operation, to judge from the first glance. The confusion we had witnessed in the house of the good Creole was as order to the chaos which we discovered here. "A place for everything and everything in its place;" this was the

rule of life enjoined me in my youth, and a vast saving of time this fine old-fashioned maxim is certain, if adhered to, to foster and induce. Here the rule of life observed was precisely the reverse. "A place for nothing, and nothing in its place." Such seemed to have been the happy dustman's happy thought, when asked what was his notion of a motto for a household; and considerable pains appeared to have been taken in obeying its behest.

The dirty floor was partly hidden by small scraps of dirty sacking, which chiefly served to make the bare boards look more bare. Dirty bits of sacking lay also on the bedstead, and formed, indeed, the bed-linen, for there were neither blanket, nor counterpane, nor sheets. The substitutes were anything but sightly to behold, as they lay all heaped and huddled anyhow, in what a tidy mistress would have termed a "horrid mess." A limp bolster and lean pillow lay also on the bed, and might, perhaps, have lately been picked out of a dust-hole, so grimy was their look. Under the unclean window stood a small deal table, whereon a battered teapot and some unwashed cups and saucers, and some half-munched crusts of bread, lay scattered all about, and seemed as though they all had met there by the merest accident, and were not to be regarded in the light of mutual friends. Huddled in one corner, as if half-ashamed of taking so much room, and being of so little use, stood a dingy chest of drawers, with a couple of porcelain poodles, hideous to behold, and some other china ornaments, encumbering its dusty top. Half-a-dozen wooden chairs, some with a fractured leg, and some with a broken back, were scattered here and there; one lay upside down, and another had apparently been used by way of toilet-table, for on its grimy seat there lay a scrap of soap, beside a partly toothless and a wholly unclean comb. For further purposes of toilet, a tub stood on the hearth, with a little dirty water in it; and near it was a bit of ragged linen which might once have been a towel, when it lived in better days. Before the empty fireplace stood a shabby, broken fender, and in the way of fire-irons it held an old bent poker, which I hoped had not been used as an instrument of torture, or a weapon of offence.

On the wall, by way of ornament, there hung an old Dutch clock, with a dirty pair of hands and an extremely filthy face. I say, by way of ornament, for it was clearly

of no use. Both its hands were pointing idly to the figure VI., and to stir them into motion there were to be seen neither pendulum nor weights. "It ain't o' much account, or it wouldn't be a 'angin' there," remarked the old woman, with rather an air of mystery; but I own I failed to fathom the deep meaning of her words. For further mural decoration there were a pair of coloured prints—one, with a row of blooming, potted lilies and blazing, lighted candles, representing the "Interior of the Grave of the Holy Virgin," if we might believe the legend printed at the foot. The other, equally ill designed, though hardly so pretentious, depicted the "Interior of the Grave of Christ." These samples of high art were of foreign manufacture, and bore the name of "Lipschitz," in grateful recognition of their publisher's great fame. They had been bought, said the old woman, by the payment of a shilling weekly for eleven weeks. Were they put up for sale at Christie's—remote as seems the likelihood of any such event—it is doubtful if the bidding could by any means be raised to one-eleventh part of the price which they had cost.

Another tawdry print, coarsely coloured like the pair, was hung on the wall opposite; its title, "Ecce Homo," being, with the printer's name, in foreign type. The room further was embellished by a few more cheap engravings, chiefly sacred in their subject, and one coarse sporting print. Something in the sight of these decorative objects impelled me to enquire if their owner were a Catholic, and as a denial was given with some vehemence, I excused myself by saying that the name of his wife's mother had induced me to imagine him Hibernian by birth. "Shure we're Cockney-born, the hull of us," affirmed that lady forcibly, but I am free to own that there was something in her accent, as she made the affirmation, which, if noticed in a witness-box, might have been cited as a reason for a doubt of her good faith.

The dustman was her son-in-law, she proceeded to reiterate, and "a goodish sort he was, too," she furthermore remarked. He daily "arned two shillen, or it might be 'arf-a-crown," while his better half contrived, if she were lucky, to gain eighteenpence a day by labour previously described as "working at the 'Eaps." Dimly guessing what the "'Eaps" were, I shyly put a question which led to my enlightenment. "She sifes of the dust, shure, an' sortes of it out, for there's stuff in it may be as is wuth the

pickin' over, and a sellin' to the Stores." I presumed she meant the stores where the Black Doll is suspended, as a sign to attract custom. Few other stores, I fancy, would deal much in the merchandise exported from the 'Eaps.

"Walables? 'Taint likely. Shure the sarvants picks 'em out afore they gits into the dust'ole. There ain't a blessed bone as the cook don't get a 'old on. Waste? Yis shure, she'd heard there was a sight o' waste a' times, down in the kitchen of the swells." But she did not somehow notice the crusts of bread-and-butter which lay scattered on the table, and which would probably be thrown into the dust-bin in the course of her "tidying up."

The rent of this one room was two and threepence weekly, the landlord "doing" the repairs, and the tenants too, perhaps. There were large cracks in the walls, which looked as though they were fast losing the only coat of whitewash which ever had been theirs. The little paint there was had nearly disappeared beneath the dirt that covered it. A window-pane was broken, and stuffed up with some paper, and the plaster in big patches was peeling from the ceiling, and bits of it were lying on the bed and on the floor. "Shure an' it'll be tumblin' on the boys, and crackin' of their skulls when they're aslape," said their old grandmother, her brogue getting the better of her as she poured some of the vials of her wrath upon the landlord, with whom she plainly had a feud.

On my noticing the dust-bin, just opposite the door, and remarking that it hardly could be deemed a wholesome neighbour, judging by its smell, she replied, "Deed, it tain't so bad jist now. Shure 'tis in summer you should smell it." And then her anger blazed forth at the misdeeds of the neighbours—nine families there were of them—who misused their common property, and mistook the pavement for the dust-bin of the court. "They throws their stuff down anywheres a'most," she plaintively complained. "They do make me so aggarawated. 'Pon me sowl, they scatters it about for all the world like sowing seed."

We paid one or two more visits before we left the court, to which I may perhaps find reason to return. In the West, as in the East, one may be easily presented at such a court as this, and doubtless many an honest home may be discovered even dirtier than the one I have described. There may be nothing very singular in the sketch which I have drawn, and maybe

many of my readers may know where a companion picture might be made. Poverty may make a man acquainted with queer bedding as well as with strange bedfellows, and there is no reason why honesty should never dwell divorced from cleanliness of life. Still, unless upon the principle that the driver of fat oxen should himself be fat, I was puzzled to make out why the dustman's home I saw was so conspicuous for dirt. Whether any drop of Irish blood were flowing in the veins of the family who lived in it, or, if so, whether such a fact was sufficient to account for the filthiness we found—these are problems which are far too deep for my philosophy to fathom, and which the reader will excuse me from endeavouring to solve.

"BACHELOR'S HALL"

IN TWO PARTS. PART II.

THE very Rev. Dr. Pye Stephens had paid sufficiently for his nocturnal escapade, it may be thought. But the Squire, just ripe for fun, insisted that he should dress and come into the dining-room to finish the night; whilst the further penalty was inflicted of joining the chorus of the song, sung with boundless approbation by one of the company, beginning

A parson once had a remarkable foible
Of loving good liquor far more than his Bible;
His neighbours all said he was much less perplexed
In handling a tankard than in handling a text.
Derry down, down, down, derry down.

"Chevy Chase" succeeded, and the night closed with Dibdin singing his last new song, to music of his own composing, with a jolly chorus by the whole company.

Stephens was one of a class of parsons so peculiar to and characteristic of the past that we the more readily dwell upon these traits of character as they can never re-appear. He was kept in countenance by his brother rector of the neighbouring parish of Stockton, whose high-spirited hunter might have been seen waiting on the Sunday at the church door, that he might start immediately service was over for Melton Mowbray. His clerk, old Littlehales, who to more secular professions added that of village tailor, was wont to tell how his master, being in need of a pair of hunting-breeches, closed the church one Sunday in order to give him the opportunity of making them, remarking, "Hang the church! you stop at home and make the breeches." But the rector of Willey was by no means so enthusiastic a

sportsman as his brother of Stockton; on the other hand, he by no means resembled those bilious members of the profession,

Who spit their puny spite on harmless recreation.

He held, what it might be difficult to gainsay, that amusements calculated to strengthen the frame and improve the health, if fitting for gentlemen are not unfitting for clergymen. His presence, at any rate, was welcomed by neighbouring squires in the field, as "Hark in! Hark in! Hark! Yoi over boys!" sounded on the morning air; and as he sat mounted on the Squire's thoroughbred it would have been difficult to detect anything of the divine; the clerical waistcoat and black single-breasted outer garment giving place to more fitting field garb. He also willingly associated with his more humble neighbours, joining in their pastimes and amusements; would sit down with them, and take a pipe and moisten his clay from a pewter tankard at a clean-scoured table in a roadside inn. As a justice of the peace he was no regarder of persons, providing they equally brought grist to his mill, and had no objection to litigants smoothing the way to a decision by presents, whether of a piece of pork, a pork-pie, or a dish of fish; but he had the misfortune once or twice to find that the fish had been caught the previous night out of his own pond. Next to a weakness for fish was one for knee-breeches and top-boots, which, in the course of much riding, required frequent renewal; and seated in a judicial chair he had the satisfaction at times of seeing a pair of new chalked-tops projecting alike from plaintiff's and defendant's pockets. In such cases, with head thrown back as though to look above petty details, he would, after sundry hums and haws and enquiries after the crops, find the evidence balanced, and suggest a compromise. A good tale was told to Dibdin of this reverend justice wanting a hare for a friend, and employing a notorious poacher to procure one. The man brought it in a bag, when the following colloquy took place. "You've brought a hare, then?" said the justice. "I have, Mr. Stephens, and a fine one too," replied the other, as he turned it out, puss flying round the room and over the table amongst the papers like a mad thing. "Kill her! kill her!" shouted Stephens. "No!" replied the poacher, who knew that by doing so he would bring himself within the law; "you kill her, I've had enough trouble to catch her." After

two or three runs the justice succeeded in hitting her on the head with the ruler, and thus brought himself within the power of the poacher, who swore that if, when he came before him again, he "did not pull him through," he would peach.

Another guest invited to meet Dibdin was Hinton, town clerk, who was called King of Wenlock. He was a match for Stephens in legal knowledge, and better posted up in Acts of Parliament; for when an Act was passed and two sent down, he kept one for his use, and the other he threw into a dark room, where hundreds more lay rotting. Among the guests also assembled were Whitmore of Apley, M.P. for a neighbouring borough; John Wilkinson, "Father of the English Iron Trade," as he has since been called, who had works on the estate, where James Watt erected the first engine made at Soho; also Thomas Turner, of Caughley, whose china is now so much sought after by collectors, and to whom Mr. Forester gave one of a pair of oil portraits, showing the squire in scarlet coat, holding a fox's brush, a painting now in possession of Hubert Smith, Esq., Town Clerk of Bridgenorth, and author of *Tent Life in Norway*, and other works.

Dibdin was made much of by these local notables, and was literally trotted out for show on neighbouring estates. One such visit was associated with a somewhat romantic incident, locally historical, and fraught with consequences anything but pleasant to a young lady, the principal personage concerned. Most of Mr. Forester's friends were "three bottle men," who, under the influence of Bacchus and the inspiration of Diana combined, sometimes allowed themselves to perform strange feats. Squire Boycott, who hunted the Shifnal country with his own hounds, was one of these, and one who, like others, had issued invitations to the host and guest of Willey, taking care to include the squire's chaplain, the Rev. Michael Pye Stephens.

A jovial company assembled, but between the invitation and the general muster an incident occurred which added to Squire Boycott's family, and which, in the ordinary course of things, might have been thought sufficient to cause the postponement of the festive gathering, but which, as the sequel will show, by original ingenuity and clever device, only served to give variety to the amusement, and to add éclat to the proceedings.

The conversation turned, as usual, on incidents associated with the favourite sport; much fine sherry and crusted port had been drunk, and the three bottle standard had been well-nigh reached, when the health of the generous host was given, and it occurred to the most inebriated to toast the new comer; the next step then suggested itself of naming the fair-haired stranger, who was brought down by the nurse for exhibition. The matter broached in jest was speedily debated in earnest. The family pedigree was ransacked, and every name discarded as unsuitable, when it was decided to leave it to one of the company to fix upon one suitable for the occasion, and to adopt it whatever it might be. Diana, one might have thought, would have suggested itself, but Bacchus being in the ascendant, drunken ingenuity could rise no higher than the name of Foxhunting Moll. And the Willey chaplain being in readiness, with a basin of pump-water, amid boisterous merriment and frantic shouts of whoo-whoop, tally-ho, etc., the little innocent was baptised Foxhunting Moll Boycott, without reference to any inconvenience that might ensue to the unconscious recipient of the name in after life.

As Foxhunting Moll Boycott the young lady grew up; by this singular name she was known; with it she signed all legal documents, including her marriage certificate.

It is time, however, to direct attention to the special and more direct object of Dibdin's visit to the country, which was to collect, as we have said, materials for his song of Tom Moody. The group of sporting worthies indicated had by this time seen their best days, and were content to rest on their laurels. Tom Moody, admittedly the best whipper-in in England, had gone to his grave in Barrow churchyard, followed by his favourite horse, his "Old Soul," as he called him, carrying his last fox's brush in front of his bridle, with his cap, whip, spurs, and girdle across the saddle, and, by his own special desire, three rattling view halloos had been given over his remains.

Excepting for the brief period during which he lived with Mr. Corbett, with the elder Seabright for his fellow-whip, when the Sundorne roof-trees rang to the toast of "Old Trojan," he spent his whole life at Willey. He was, in fact, what Mr. Forester made him. Nature supplied the material, and Squire Forester did the rest. He entered the squire's service when a youth, having,

like most boys of the period, been thrown upon his own resources, a state of things which fostered that self-reliance and humble heroism which help to make life wholesome. It was a feat of pluck and daring, performed on the bare back of a crop-eared cob, which gave birth to the after events of his life. His first duties were to go on errands from the Hall, and, once outside the park, he failed not to make use of his opportunities. In riding, it was generally up hill and down dale at neck-or-nothing speed, stopping neither for gate or hedge, his horse tearing away at a rate which sometimes gave him three or four somersaults at a slip; but he seldom turned his horse's head if he could help it, and if he went down he was soon up again. Extraordinary tales are told of him in sporting circles, a few only of which we give. Having a spite against a pike-keeper, for not opening the gate in time, Tom "tanselled his hide," as he called it, and next time he went that way, touching his horse on the flanks, he went over the gate, scarce starting a stitch or breaking a buckle; but on trying the same trick on another occasion, the horse went over, but the gig caught the top rail, and Tom was thrown on his back. "Just sarves you right!" was the greeting of the old pike-keeper. "It does," replied Tom, "and now we are quits," and they were friends ever after. Indeed, with or without the buff-coloured gig, there were no risks he was not prepared to run. "Aye, aye, sir," said an aged informant, "you should have seen him on his horse, a mad animal that no one but Tom could ride. Savage as he was, on a good road he would pass milestones in as many minutes, but give him green meadows, and, Lord, how I have seen him whip along the turf! He was like a winged Mercury, a regular Centaur, for he and his horse seemed one."

Tom had a famous drinking-horn which he carried with him, embellished with a hunting scene, elaborately carved with the point of a pen-knife. A windmill was at the top, and below a number of horsemen and a lady well-mounted in full chase, and hounds in full cry; in shape and size it resembled those in use in the mansions of the gentry in past years, when hospitality was dispensed with free and generous hands. It is a relic still treasured by members of the Wheatland Hunt, who look back to the time when Moody's shrill voice cheered the pack over the heavy Wheatlands, and is made to do duty at

annual social gatherings. Tom was deemed "the best whipper-in in England;" none, it was said, could bring up the tail end of a pack, or sustain the burst of a long chase, and be in at the death with every hound well up, like him.

His voice was something extraordinary, and capable of wonderful modulation; to hear him recount the sports of the day in the big kitchen at the hall, and to give his tally-ho or who-who-hoop was a treat. On one occasion, when in better trim than usual, the old housekeeper remarked: "La, Tom! you have given the who-who-hoop, as you call it, so very loud and strong to-day that you set the cups and saucers a-dancing!" To which a gentleman, who had purposely placed himself within hearing, replied that he was not at all surprised, for he had never heard anything so imposing or attractive, some of the tones being as fine and mellow as a French-horn.

Tom was a frequent visitor at "Hangster's Gate," a wayside inn, where the coaches called; a cheerful glass, he was wont to say, would hurt nobody; and he could toss off a horn or two of the strongest "old October" without moving a muscle or winking an eye; and whilst he could get up early and sniff the morning air or fragrant gale they did not appear to tell; but the spark in his throat which required such frequent libations finally told upon him, and finding his end approaching, he expressed a desire to see his old master. "I have," he said to the squire, "one request to make, and it is the last favour I shall crave; it is that when I am dead I may be buried under the yew-tree in Barrow Churchyard, and be carried there by six earth-stoppers; my old horse with whip, boots, spurs, and cap, slung on each side of the saddle; the brush of the last fox when I was up at the death, at the side of the forelock, and two couples of hounds to follow as mourners. When I am laid in the grave, let three halloos be given over me; and if I do not then lift up my head, you may fairly conclude that Tom Moody's dead." Moody's last wish was carried out to the letter, and a shout was given by the side of the open grave which made the welkin ring.

Such were the facts placed before Dibdin, who faithfully adhered to them in his song.

When the song first came out, Charles Incedon by "human voice divine" was drawing vast audiences at Drury Lane. On play-bills, in largest type, forming the

most attractive item of the bill of fare, this song, varied by others of Dibdin's composition, would be seen. When it was first announced to be sung a few fox-hunting friends of the squire went from Willey to London to hear it. Taking up their positions in the pit they were all attention, as the inimitable singer rolled out, with that full volume of voice which delighted and astounded his audience, the verse commencing,

You all knew Tom Moody, the whipper-in, well,
but the singer not succeeding to the satisfaction of this small knot of fox-hunters in the "tally-ho chorus," they jumped upon the stage and gave the audience a specimen of what Shropshire lungs could do.

The song soon seized upon the sporting mind, and became popular the country through. The London publishers took it up, and sold it with the music, together with illustrations, and it soon found a ready sale.

On leaving Willey, Mr. Forester asked Dibdin how he could best discharge the obligation he felt himself under for his services. The great ballad-writer, whom Pitt pensioned, replied that he would have nothing; he had been so well treated that he could not accept anything. Finding artifice necessary, Mr. Forester asked him to deliver a letter personally at his banker's on his arrival in London. Of course Dibdin consented, and on doing so found it was an order to pay him a hundred pounds.

Tom died November, 1796; and was currently reported to reappear on the ground of his former exploits, a tradition embodied in the following lines:

See the shade of Tom Moody, you all have known well,

To our sports now returning, not liking to dwell,
In a region where pleasure's not found in the chase,
So Tom's just returned to view his old place.
No sooner the hounds leave the kennels to try,
Than his spirit appears to join in the cry;
Now all with attention, his signal well mark,
For see his hands up for the cry of hark! hark!
Then cheer him and mark him—Tally-ho!

Boys! Tally-ho!

The Squire, who survived his old servant, lived on during the troubled period of the threatened invasion by the French Minister of Marine, and raised and equipped a corps called the Wenlock Loyal Volunteers, which he commanded and supported at his own cost. This was disbanded in 1802, but he raised another in 1803, when beacons were erected, and bonfires prepared on the Wrekin, and other hills the country through, as the means of transmitting the news of the approach of the enemy.

The Squire's fox-hunters readily joined,

and made an imposing show if they did nothing else, their uniform being handsome. The coat was scarlet, turned up with yellow; the trousers and waistcoat were white, the hat was a cube with red and white feathers for the grenadiers, and green for the light company.

Bachelor's Hall resounded with the clang of arms, with sound of drums and fifes, and patriotic songs. Clarionets and bugles were to be seen piled with guns and accoutrements, putting deer-horns, foxes' heads, and cabinets of oak, black as ebony, out of countenance. The Willey tenantry became as familiar with military bands as with the sound of church bells; they were often heard, in fact, together, Sunday being the day usually selected for drill, for heavy war-taxes were laid, and people had to work hard to pay them, which they did ungrudgingly. Open house was kept at Willey, and no baron of olden time dealt out hospitality more willingly or liberally. The Squire was here, there, and everywhere, visiting neighbouring squires, giving or receiving information, stirring up the gentry, and frightening the country people out of their wits. Boney became a name more terrible than bogey, alike to children and grown-up people, and the more vague the notion of invasion, the more horrible were the evils dreaded.

Parson Stephens found Boney in the Revelations, and preached about him to gaping congregations. But Boney did not come, the invasion did not take place, the excitement passed away, and time hung heavy on the hands of the Squire, who no longer found incentives to an active life. Years, too, were beginning to tell upon the veteran sportsman, reminding him that his career was drawing to a close. He made arrangements accordingly in perfect keeping with the character he had displayed through life. He expressed a wish that those who had known him best should be chosen to attend his funeral; that the servants who had experienced his kindness should carry him to his tomb when the sun had gone down and the work of the day was over; that each, too, should have a guinea, that he might meet his neighbour, if he chose, and talk over the merits and demerits of the old master. His estate he left to his cousin Cecil, who became the first Lord Forester, father of the present Right Hon. Lord Forester. He died on the 13th of July, 1811, in the seventy-third year of his age, and was buried by torch-

light—rather an imposing sight—beneath the family pew, in the church founded and endowed by the lords of Willey at a remote period, which stands within the shadow of the old Hall, and might, from its appearance, have formed the text of Gray's ivy-mantled tower, being covered with a luxuriant growth of this clinging evergreen to the very top. Peering through small Norman windows, which admit a sober light, glimpses are obtained of costly monuments, with names, titles, and escutcheons, but the Squire's tomb itself remains uninscribed. Near it, however, a marble tablet erected by Cecil Weld, the first Lord Forester, bears this simple record: "To the Memory of my late Cousin and Benefactor, George Forester, Esq., Willey Park, May 10, 1821."

JOHN DOLBY'S GOLD SECRET.

CHAPTER I.

OF all oddly-assorted friendships, that between John Dolby and Oswald Vandeleur was surely the strangest. It bewildered even the miners of Hobbing's Gulch—a rough, rollicking sample by no means prone to gratuitous speculation concerning mysteries in either earth or heaven. In the pauses of the alternative digging and card-playing the relations between the pair formed a prominent feature of camp conversation.

"I reckon there's mor'n the surface shows, mates, in the business," remarked Brum Buckles, who had gained his sobriquet from the possession of a couple of enormous brace ornaments presumably hailing from the capital of the British Midlands.

"As you hope is the case with your claim down valley—eh, Brum?" suggested Freckled Sam ironically.

A hoarse laugh ran round the group. It was known that a consistent run of bad luck had not yet made the man of jewellery less sanguine than at the commencement of his arduous adventure.

"Exactly. So I firmly believe it is," he replied.

"De younker ob de two bredren is such a——"

"Ninny," interpolated somebody.

"Ye-es, ninny," continued Dutch Joe, with all the air of a magistrate giving an irreversible decree of condemnation.

"And Dolby's never pre-cisely posed as a fool—fit for cap and bells—fore this, I

calkerlate," drawled Dick Archer, in unmistakable Yankee tones.

"No, that's what beats us," said Brum Buckles, returning to the charge; "that's what makes me vow as there's more in the affair than we can guess at all easy like. Dolby and Van are always together nowadays, and——"

The speech was cut short by the creaking of the cabin-door on its rusty hinges, and the entry of the very "younker," so contemptuously discussed.

Oswald Vandeleur—a name quickly abbreviated to "Van" at Hobbing's Gulch—was in appearance a mere boy compared to the bronzed and weather-beaten miners amongst whom his present lot was cast. By the record of a register away in a quiet English village, his years numbered on this 10th of March, 1862, just twenty-three; but no casual observer would have given him credit for the odd numeral. He was slim and upright of figure, with a fair, frank face, revealing, like a transparent window, every changing mood of the soul within. He had dreamy blue eyes, and soft, curling locks above which gave him in certain lights an almost effeminate delicacy. It was this, and a sadness which seemed unconquerable, that had procured him his reputation for weakness and ultra-simplicity amongst his outcast companions.

His errand at Norford's store was to replenish a supply of camp "dips," and was soon accomplished. With a bow to the general company which made several feel vaguely their own utter lack of polish (and so insensibly increased the prejudice against him) he withdrew.

The half-mile between the store and his own shabby little tent was not passed without an encounter with the one friend Oswald Vandeleur had contrived to make at Hobbing's Gulch.

In physique and physiognomy, at least, John Dolby was a striking contrast to his protégé. If Vandeleur looked three years younger than in truth he was, Dolby, on the contrary, appeared ten years older. He was a big, burly fellow, somewhere in the thirties, with careworn, deeply-lined face, scrubby beard, brown eyes, and hair already streaked with grey. And up to this hour he had been one of the most reticent men in camp. Now he drew the lad's arm tightly within his own, and walked back to Van's shanty.

"I want to have a talk—may be to tell you my story, in return for yours," he said.

Oswald Vandeleur was too surprised to do more than incoherently mumble his eagerness to play the part of an attentive listener. The idea that there was an inscrutable mystery in Dolby's career—perhaps a mystery of pain and crime—had long since fixed itself in Van's mind as well as in the minds of his neighbours. In these matters there is frequently a nameless contagion of belief. Was the boy destined to be taken into a confidence which none other in the tiny makeshift town would ever be asked to share?

It was even so. But first there was a still more startling surprise in store.

"They are wondering, yonder, at Norford's store, I haven't a doubt, how it is that you and I hob-and-nob so much, Van. Seems passing queer to 'em. Can you explain it?"

"Only that—that you are very kind, Mr. Dolby."

"Kind! may be I am. We'll see directly. Any luck to-day, Van?"

"No, nor ever will be, I'm fearing. Dutch Joe was about right, who told me in that barbarous lingo of his—wish they could hear him at Hibbledale!—that the claim was clean played out. 'Tis a dull prospect."

The gloom upon Van's face, which had brightened a little at mention of his distant Devonshire home, thickened into a more impenetrable cloud than ever.

"And your western Maggie—your Daisy—will have to wait yet a bit longer for the news that her lover's fortune is made?"

Vandeleur first frowned, and then gave a hollow, hoarse laugh. If this was meant for pleasantry on Dolby's part it was singularly ill-timed.

"I suppose so," he said.

There was a pause, and both men watched in an outwardly moody silence the flickering spark on the broken bottle that served for candlestick.

Then Dolby spoke:

"Well, tell 'em at Norford's store—they who are anxious for the information, a new pickaxe 'ud be more useful—tell 'em that I took a fancy to Oswald Vandeleur because Fortune had seemingly taken a spite against him. Because he's in love, and means to win the girl he loves, in spite of a guardian whose only creed is 'gold to gold.' Because I saw that he was homesick, as I've been many and many a day. Because he took me for what I am—an honest man! and laid bare the emotions of his inmost heart before me. Tell 'em that!"

It was a strange, almost an eerie monologue, and Van could only listen in an astonishment not unmixed with terror. Had trouble turned Dolby's brain? The fierce, passionate emphasis with which the declaration of integrity was uttered lent a measure of colour to the paralysing supposition.

And the sudden change of tone and subject which followed did not tend to disabuse the young man of his awful fear.

"But your luck is better, Van, than you think," Dolby continued. "I've struck a lode at last, after years of waiting, here and elsewhere, and nobody knows it but myself. I'll sell it to you, for a few shillings down, just to make the bargain square, and not a gift. In a week or two you'll be rich; in a month or two you can go back to your Hibbledale and marry Maggie."

The scared, searching enquiry of the boy's glance disclosed once more what was passing in his thoughts.

"Oh, I am sane enough—never more so; and every syllable I've uttered is true," Dolby said.

Van flushed, and a wild tide of conflicting emotions swept upwards from his heart and stayed even an attempt at speech. Was the offer genuine? Were the facts as stated? What could be the key to such unparalleled magnanimity?

"I am afraid—I do not quite understand," he contrived at length to gasp.

"'Tis a simple proposal too. I've got a gold secret for which the fellows yonder—every man-jack of them—would slave night and day till they dropped, and it's yours for the taking—on one condition only."

"And that?"

"Is—to believe me. Come, as I said at the beginning, I'll give you, in as few words as I can, the story of a ruined life."

The lines about the wrinkled face took a fresh harshness, the eyes were fixed and dilated, the voice resonant and high-pitched. It was evident that the proposed recapitulation of bygone wrongs must give acute pain.

Van chivalrously interposed to stay the narrative, but Dolby took no heed of his protest. It may be questioned if he even heard it.

"I, like you, am country born and reared," he said; "a quaint old town sequestered amidst the lovely Berkshire lanes was the home of my youth, and I too have loved in vain! I was cashier in the Grenbury Bank, and one day there fell a frightful blow upon me. A forgery was committed, and suspicion turned in my

direction. The evidence, I admit, was black—black, but half false. I was tried before a merciful jury, and escaped. But everybody believed me guilty, nevertheless. I dared not go back home. The stain was upon me. I should have been shunned by all. Even Agnes would have scorned me!" A rare and touching tone, as of far-off music, was in the faltering accents. "I emigrated, and have been a wanderer ever since."

"I am very sorry for you," Van murmured.

The simple, grave sympathy nearly broke the strong man down. He paused and contracted his brows into a frown that would assuredly have cowed and disturbed even Freckled Sam, who had the repute of being the most dare-devil member of the Hobbing's Gulch community. That frown alone prevented the dropping of a great salt tear. The spasm of tumultuous feeling passed, and Dolby resumed:

"And to-night I offer you wealth—to me, after all, of little value—for faith that I am innocent. One being in the world shall believe that I had neither part nor lot in that crime."

"And without what you propose I do so believe. I am sure of it!" Van replied warmly.

"That is well, then; I thank you. And you will go to England, and if by any chance you hear the story there, and I am accused——"

"I will declare that John Dolby is as incapable of such a crime as the child in his mother's arms. But, indeed, sir, I cannot rob you of your reward thus!"

"Pshaw! You will obey, Van," the other said sternly; "anyhow, I shall strike no pick into that lode. I leave Hobbing's Gulch to-morrow for ever. 'Tis a dreary place at best."

"I have found it so," said Vandeleur.

"Come now, and I will show you the spot."

The two went out into the chill night breeze together, the man's pulses slowly subsiding into their wonted calm—what to him was the abandonment of gold after loss of character—the boy's beating high and yet higher with mingled hope, bewilderment, and gratitude. It was a strange errand, and they were a strange couple.

Within four-and-twenty hours a throng—facsimile of the earlier one—was discussing at Norford's store two pieces of camp intelligence. The first, and, as they held, most important, was that Oswald Vandeleur had made a rich discovery of precious metal; the second, that John Dolby had left for San Francisco.

CHAPTER II.

IF possession is nine-tenths of the law, as we are so frequently assured, continual proximity to the object of his affections is at least half-way towards victory in the lover's battle. Combined with his rival's abrupt disappearance, and the arguments of Sir Frederick Mitton, it had nearly won the fight for Eustace Ross.

At first Maggie Hayes had been frigid and difficult of approach as an arctic iceberg. Then she had thawed into the sublimest indifference, a phase equally awkward and tantalising to the eager wooer. Lastly, she had come to listen with forbearance and a measure of cordiality, if not with something more, to Eustace's soft speeches. The rumour flitted about Hibbledale that the pair were "engaged," and Maggie knew that this was so. Even in suffering the report to pass uncontradicted, and continuing her favours to the suitor, she was in a sense deliberately forecasting a very probable future. Her uncle wished her to marry this man. Eustace was handsome and apparently well-to-do. Where could the objection be?

And at this moment Oswald Vandeleur returned with a well-lined purse, older, browner, as much in love as ever.

Maggie was gone on a visit—he had a difficulty in discovering where. It was quite settled, so said the Hibbledale hotel-keeper, that she was to marry, in the ensuing summer, Mr. Eustace Rosa. This was the early news for which Oswald had been hungering, with a vengeance! In high dudgeon he went off to Grenbury.

A cynic—at least in this instance—has defined gratitude as the lively sense of favours to come. But Oswald Vandeleur subscribed to an opposite and more old-fashioned creed. All the way home he had been revolving in his mind how he could repay his eccentric comrade of the western wilderness on the lines John Dolby had himself marked out. He had resolved to devote both time and money—was not the latter John Dolby's own?—to the unravelling of the ancient mystery. And alighting at the Grenbury station, he stood on the threshold of his self-imposed task.

The bank forgery? Oh yes; it was well-remembered in the lazy provincial town. The bank cashier was undoubtedly the culprit; one Dolby, a tall, fine-built fellow, and wonderfully liked for such a rogue. He was tried for it. To be sure he got off, through some swerve of Dame Justice's descending sword. But nobody

believed him innocent. He absconded from Grenbury immediately after his acquittal; that fact alone was sufficient proof of criminality for simple folk. This was the summary of the local judgment.

"And he was as guiltless as I am of that past deed," Oswald boldly declared. "I know him well, and have no doubt at all upon the matter."

An incredulous smile and some shrugging of the shoulders showed the unutterable conviction of each and every listener.

"What is more, I have come here for the express purpose of proving it," Oswald said; and then even some degree of anger mingled with the rustic surprise. Who or what was this would-be upsetter of accepted and common-sense theories?

Oswald threw his whole soul into his undertaking, and when a man does that, the lions in any path are apt to dwindle into very harmless and diminutive beasts indeed. He made elaborate enquiry in every quarter from whence the least light was to be expected. He ransacked official records of his friend's trial, and subjected the evidence to a more exhaustive scrutiny than it had received in either the Grenbury police-court or the Ickworth assize-room. Ultimately he constructed a theory of his own, and the central figure in this, as yet far from perfect outline, was one Richard Poulton, a clerk in the Grenbury Bank at the time of the forgery. Poulton also had vanished from the Berkshire town within twelve months of Dolby's acquittal, and Oswald was convinced that he and not the cashier had been the real criminal.

The question of how to prove it was more difficult of solution. But a kindly fate smiled once more on the young man's enthusiastic endeavour. Aid came from an humble but exceedingly authoritative source. In the course of his investigations Oswald had had occasion to interview an old man who had till recently acted as the bank porter and general factotum. From him he had at first gleaned little. Peter Swales was in the last stage of physical decay, and persistent questioning seemed cruel. Oswald acquainted the sufferer with his errand, was told that Peter had few reminiscences to offer, and went away, not proposing to return. He was sent for.

"I cannot die wi' a sin o' this sort upon my conscience," the old man groaned. "You be Mister Dolby's friend, bean't you?"

"Yes."

"And want to show as he didn't do that as ruined him?"

"Such is my object."

"Nor more he didn't. 'Twas Richard Poulton, an' I 'elped him, for—for fifty pun as he gie me. Atween us we worked it as Dolby was thought the party. But Dolby had nought to do wi' it. 'Twas a black business—a black business! I've niver bin easy night nor day since. 'Tis that has as mostly broken me down. I'll made a clean breast of it now."

Visited by the bank proprietor and a local police-inspector, the penitent told his story at length, and his depositions were taken.

"It is a most wretched affair," said Mr. Mavis, as he and Oswald walked away together from the riverside hovel. "In six months time John Dolby would have married my niece, and have become a partner in my firm. I never could understand how he threw away all his chances, unless it was at the bidding of some sudden and overwhelming temptation, such as we sometimes read of but seldom witness. The blow wrecked my niece's life also. Agnes loved him, and has never married."

"The next step will be, if possible, to find Poulton?"

"Yes; I shouldn't wonder if he were safely out of England—the scoundrel!"

"You can describe him pretty accurately, I suppose, Mr. Mavis?"

"I have his photograph at home. Come in and see it, Mr. Vandeleur."

Oswald readily accepted the invitation. He was curious to scan the lineaments of the unscrupulous villain who had built up his own fortune upon the broken hearts of those who had never wronged him. This was worse even than the theft of the gold.

A carte-de-visite was produced, and Oswald recognised Enstace Ross.

For a full minute—to use a hackneyed but convenient metaphor—the amateur detective was smitten into stone. Every vestige of colour fled from his cheeks—speech was impossible. He could only stand paralysed and helpless before this presentment of a double-dyed traitor.

The banker was lynx-eyed and observed his agitation.

"You have seen this face before to-day, Mr. Vandeleur?" he said.

The query recalled Oswald to the problem of the moment.

"I have, and I believe that I know Richard Poulton's present whereabouts," he answered; "he is residing under an assumed name in the Devonshire village which has been for years my own home."

"Wheel within wheel," Mr. Mavis said.

"He is passing for a gentleman——"

"On borrowed capital—to employ a polite euphemism."

"And he is actually wooing a young lady who is the ward of a baronet—of Sir Frederick Mitton, of Mitton Court. When I was last in Hibbledale the story went that the young couple would be man and wife by August."

"If that prophecy is to be fulfilled, the next few hours must witness the ceremony," dryly remarked Mr. Mavis; "for after that brief respite he is likely, I should say, to spend a fair stretch of years 'in durance vile.'"

Oswald Vandeleur's knocking to and fro in a hard and censorious world had given him a somewhat more effectual control of his feelings than he could have boasted at Hobbing's Gulch. Moreover, there was surely excuse on the surface for considerable emotion. The banker little guessed with what keen personal interest and deep soul-relief his young acquaintance had received this latter revelation.

The thinnest gleam of the most watery sunshine brings joy to the weary watcher, after the blackness and turmoil of a prolonged storm. And a hope was springing up in Oswald's heart that this unexpected outburst of potential deliverance might prove far more than a gleam.

He was not disappointed.

The sword of Damocles, of which Richard Poulton, alias Eustace Ross, had remained in a profound ignorance up to the last moment, had fallen, and all the gossips of Hibbledale were discussing the romantic unmasking of a villain and a hypocrite.

Maggie Hayes was back in the village now, and knew all. As chance would have it—arranging its tableaux better than any dramatist could scheme—Oswald and Maggie met, for the first time since Oswald's departure, on the broad plantation pathway that fringed Sir Frederick Mitton's park. With a pretty, fawn-like gesture of surprise the girl darted forward. Somehow, without the need of words—neither could have quite explained it—the lovers were locked in a close embrace.

"And did you really dare to think that I could ever have cared for that man, Oswald?"

"I was informed that you were engaged to marry him."

"And you believed it?"

"I fear I had but little option. I was aware of Sir Frederick's predilection in my rival's favour. But all is well that ends well, Maggie. I can even feel pity for Poulton this afternoon—miscreant as he is."

Events had so flagrantly proved the incorrectness of Sir Frederick Mitton's judgment that that gentleman deemed his only resource a reluctant submission to his ward's wishes. Long before the harvest-shocks had begun to gleam and sway in summer breezes on the Devonshire hillsides, Oswald and Maggie Vandeleur had set up a happy if unostentatious home of their own. Hibbledale was not robbed of its excitement in the matter of a wedding, after all.

There remained the fulness of reparation to John Dolby. Advertisements were inserted in English, American, and colonial papers *ad libitum*. But for two years with no success. Then, in a roundabout way, a message did come. John Dolby had embarked for England on board a Cunard steamer.

"And you will take back what is, in common truth and honesty, your own, Mr. Dolby?" Oswald said. "Now that we are married, my wife's fortune——"

"Say no more—not a syllable!" interrupted the wanderer, with a frown that vividly recalled to his companion's mind the memorable conversation in a mountain shanty on the evening of Oswald's twenty-third birthday. "You have done far more for me; and you bought the claim by miner's law equitably enough. No, no; the debt is mine to-day. You have given me back the very bank partnership for which I toiled in those past years, my character, and—Agnes!"

And with this decision, Oswald was forced to remain content.

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BY BASIL.
AUTHOR OF "LOVE THE DEED," ETC.

CHAPTER XXVI. RECAPTURE OF IDA.

ARCHIE had been more fool than knave, more sinned against than sinning in this Bompas business; and he had been a fool too in good and large company. That fatal packet of letters was but one of a number which Mrs. Bompas had made marketable. When she was in low water—and her drunken improvidence left her often in low water—she took a packet from its pigeon-hole, sought out the writer, and extorted all she could. Anastasia's maiden heart had been mortgaged to so many that her mother was like to make a fair income out of it, so long as she could keep each mortgagee persuaded that he alone had a lien on the young lady's affections.

Anastasia was herself a businesslike young person, and took a proper pride in—as well as a proper share of—the amounts realised by these letters. And, indeed, she was reasonably proud thereof, since she owed the number and brilliance of her triumphs as much to her cleverness as to her beauty. She was very pretty, certainly, with the most artlessly innocent face, and soft, large, meek, appealing brown eyes that seemed to say to you, with Sterne's donkey, "Don't be cruel to me; but, if you will, you may." This patient plaintiveness of expression she turned to the utmost advantage, for she pursued almost invariably, and with almost invariable success, one single, simple system of tactics—the confidence trick, prettily played.

Having chosen her victim, she would shyly and tremulously, as though driven to it and at bay, make him her confidant. It seemed that there was some other young

gentleman who persecuted her continually and to rudeness. What was she to do! She dared not tell her mother—a dragon of propriety—who would be far more enraged with her than with her persecutor, and who would probably forthwith fly from Cambridge. But she—Anastasia—couldn't bear the thought of quitting Cambridge. She had such dear ties there—dear friends—who had been kind to her, oh, kindness itself to her. (Here the dove-like eyes made it unmistakable that she meant the young gentleman in hand.) What was she to do! The young gentleman in hand would demand ferociously the name of her base persecutor. Then would Anastasia start aghast. A quarrel! And her spotless name mixed up with it! Her mother's anger! Exile from Cambridge! Never more to see her friends, her protector! Oh no, she couldn't tell his name. She was so sorry she had mentioned it, but she felt so friendless and defenceless, without a brother even; but there was something in his face, in his manner, which surprised her, as by a sudden and irresistible impulse, out of her confidence. It was very foolish, and forward, and selfish of her to trouble him with her troubles. Would he forgive her and forget it! etc., etc. What youth, burning to prove himself a man, could resist an appeal like this to what is most manly in manhood, made by beauty in distress.

Nought is there under heaven's wide hollowness
That moves more dears compassion of mind,
Than beauty brought t' unworthie wretchedness
Through envious snares, or fortune's freaks un-
kind—
I, whether lately through her brightness blynd,
Or through alleagance, and fast fealty,
Which I do owe unto all womankind,
Feele my heart pierced with no great agony,
When such I see, that all for pity I could dy.

There was not in England a youth more likely to fall into such a trap than Archie;

not from his vanity merely, but from his generosity. He was vain, of course, as all young men are, but he was chivalrous also as few are. And to do Anastasia justice, she discerned his merits, and made love to him less as a piece of business than to any other of her victims. In his case, in fact, the young lady was caught, as far as she could be caught, in her own net. What love she had to give she gave Archie, and was very much more than "half the wooer." What then of his admission to his mother that he would probably have married her? In the first place he had returned the kind of love she gave, such as it was, and in the second place, her pathetic and plaintive appeals were addressed at once to his strength and his weakness—his generosity, made up in part of vanity, and in part of chivalry.

Then appeared suddenly upon the scene the true Amphitryon, a certain Mr. Hyslop, whose presents and prospects were much more magnificent than Archie's. Of course, the first effect of his rivalry was to raise Archie's passion to a white heat, and Anastasia would probably have found the disencumbering herself of him as difficult a business as the ensnaring of him, if a Mr. Jacob, a friend of Archie's, had not helped her, by comparing identical notes with him as to the siren's seduction of himself. Soon after Archie's disenchantment, both mother and daughter disappeared from Cambridge, and from that day to this he had heard nothing of them, and would have heard nothing of them now, if Mrs. Bompas had not learned his address from a report in a Ryecote newspaper of the Denton railway accident.

This being the simple truth of the story, it is little wonder if Archie felt he had hard measure dealt to him, and if he expressed the feeling to his mother, when—after a vain attempt to interview Ida—she came down to ask him how he sped.

"All is over forever between us, mother," he groaned.

"What did she say?"

"Only that she has no feeling."

"No feeling!"

"Or she thinks I have none." Then Archie recounted what had passed between them, raving alternately and inconsistently over Ida's goodness and heartlessness, and winding up with an appeal to his mother to see the girl and plead for hope for him.

Mrs. John shook her head.

"I couldn't intrude on her now, Archie. She begged so plaintively to be left to

herself. You see, dear, since she was a child she has been so driven in upon herself, that now she cannot bear to show her heart to anyone. She's like that Bastille prisoner, who, having passed nearly all his life in a dungeon, couldn't bring himself to leave it when he had the chance at last."

"But they will be here in a few minutes now," he argued desperately.

"They," were Mrs. Tuck and Dick, who had announced their intention of coming to fetch Ida. They were not going to allow this dangerous cousin another tête-à-tête railway journey with her. However, Mrs. John convinced him that another interview with Ida would be at once impossible and impolitic; and he did not see her again till Mrs. Tuck and Dick appeared.

Mrs. Tuck asked at once for Ida, and when, after a short interval, the girl came downstairs, she saw in a moment that she was in deep trouble. Attributing it to Ida's sorrow at parting, Mrs. Tuck was furious with a twofold jealousy—jealous herself of Mrs. John, and jealous, for Dick's sake, of Archie. Nevertheless, she was so consummate an actress that she appeared overpowered with gratitude, to Mrs. John for her hospitality, and to Archie for his care of Ida on the night of the accident. Nay, she even proceeded to rally Ida, in her wittiest way, on her world-wide celebrity as a stoker.

Dick, too, after his manner, was jocose and genial, but with less effort. He was too easy-going to be tormented by either love or jealousy. Still, he was deeply disgusted by Ida's dejection, on which he put the same construction as his aunt, and his cheery chaff, therefore, was creditable to his politeness. Thus with words soft as butter on their tongues, and war in their hearts, they carried off Ida most dejected and wretched.

"She seems very grateful and friendly," said Archie as he and Mrs. John returned together after seeing them off by the train.

He was trying to find some faint hope in Mrs. Tuck's effusive manner.

"Mrs. Tuck? She has her reasons for it, Archie, you may depend upon it. I don't know what they are, but I do know what they're not. They're not that she wishes you and Ida ever to see or hear again of each other."

"Why then did she allow her to stay with us at all?"

"You ran away with her; and I suppose she thought it made the thing look better

to allow her to stay with us for a week or so, as though it had been a pre-arranged visit. But she's done with us now."

"Why should you think so?" querulously.

"Why? What is the one thing she has set her heart on? Ida's marriage to that nephew of hers. Would it help it forward if she and you were allowed to fall in love? She'll never allow Ida to come here again, Archie. Of that I'm sure."

"But she was so friendly, and even affectionate," urged Archie again, clinging desperately to this straw.

"Her manner was like her complexion, Archie—too glowing to be natural. People always overdo rouge."

At this point they perceived the Rev. John approaching them in (for him) breathless haste and perturbation; and they hurried forward to meet him, sure that something very unusual, and probably unfortunate, had occurred.

CHAPTER XXVII. TOM CHOWN REACHES HOME.

THE Rev. John, as we say, appeared at this moment much perturbed.

"Poor Tom has come back, Mary!"

"Tom Chown?"

"Yes; I don't know where we could put him, unless in that room Ida's been in."

This was the Rev. John's manner. He was so absent-minded that it was almost as hard to get anything clearly out of him as to get anything clearly into him. He often, for instance, as now, took it for granted either that you knew already, or that he had already told you, the essential part of his news.

"Put him in Ida's room!"

"Well, as you like, Mary; but the attic is so draughty."

"Now, John," taking him by the lapels of his coat to wake him up; "now, John, 'Tom Chown has come back'—go on from there," as though he had skipped a sentence in reading from a primer.

"He's come back very ill, Mary—dying—and that place isn't fit for a pig."

"Poor Tom! What place?"

"A wretched cellar in Leeds."

Archie, on hearing the news, started up in far the deepest trouble of the three. Not even Mrs. John had a kinder heart than he, and Tom had been far more to him than to Mrs. John. All true lovers will despise him when we confess that he forgot for the moment his other trouble in this. But Archie had loved Tom as long

as he could remember anything, and loved him all the more warmly for being a dependent.

Proud people can love only dependents; but again, there are people who, not from pride, but from generosity, love dependents most, and Archie was of this latter class.

"Poor Tom!" he cried, echoing Mrs. John, but with even more emotion. "Mother, I shall have him here in two hours, if you'll get the room ready;" and getting the address from the Rev. John, he hurried away.

Let us explain Tom's disappearance and reappearance.

Upon Archie's departure for Cambridge Tom became unsettled, and took it into his head to go seek his fortune. Having got this idea into what he was pleased to call his mind, no dissuasions of the Rev. John's, or even of Mrs. John's, could dispossess him of it. Accordingly, he went far north to Newcastle, where work then was plentiful and wages high.

At first he wrote regularly to Archie, but when, rather from weakness than from wickedness, he fell into bad company and bad ways, and lost his work, and had to leave Newcastle, he gave up writing from sheer shame. Archie, writing still to Newcastle, had his letters returned to him through the Dead Letter Office. Then he applied to the firm for whom Tom had worked for information about him, and heard from its secretary that Chown had gone to the bad altogether, had lost his work and left the town, and set off no one knew whither. Archie didn't in the least believe that Tom had gone utterly to the bad, but he had no doubt that he had got into some scrape which had cost him his work, and had shamed him out of answering his old playmate's letter. Archie then tried the only other way he could think of—advertisement in the Newcastle papers—without result, and finally and sorrowfully had to give up all hope of discovering Tom's whereabouts.

Meantime Tom had gone to Glasgow, and got good work there, and had almost made up his mind to write to Archie a full confession of his past backslidings, coupled with a redeeming resolution to keep straight for the future. But everyone knows that no debt gathers such compound interest as the debt of a letter. If you don't answer it when the answer is due, every day you delay doubles your disinclination to write it. If this is so ordinarily, how much more would it be so with a weak-

mindful man like Tom, who was a poor hand at writing, and had but a poor tale to tell? So Tom put off writing till he had a poorer tale still to tell, and couldn't bring himself to tell it.

After he had been nearly a year in Glasgow, he again got led away and astray, and seemed bent at this plunge to touch the bottom.

Even his Glasgow employers, who were much more tolerant of such infirmities than those with whom he had had to deal in Newcastle, lost patience with him and dismissed him. Then Tom took again to the tramp, and sought work up and down, and sometimes got it, but more often didn't, and was penniless therefore, and endured terrible hardships. At last the poor prodigal turned homewards,

As a hare, whom hounds and horns pursue,
Pants to the place from whence at first she flew.

A simile, by the way, which Goldsmith seems to have borrowed from Dryden:

The hare in pastures or in plains is found,
Emblem of human life, who runs the round,
And after all his wandering ways are done,
His circle fills and ends where he begun,
Just as the setting meets the rising sun.

Anyhow the image expresses only too faithfully poor Tom's hunted and harried course homewards.

Every man's hand was against him, and he was driven from town to town, from village to village, from door to door, and even from ditch to ditch—when he tried there to get an hour's sleep—as though he were leprous, and tainted the air he breathed. It may be said that he had brought it all on himself and deserved it all; but if we all had our deserts who should 'scape whipping? Certainly poor Tom paid up to the uttermost farthing. When at last he reached Darlington, with twopence he had begged to pay for a bed, his health was so broken down by hunger, exposure, and exhaustion, that he caught there in a low lodging-house one of those fevers which are always prowling about in such places, to fall like famished wolves on the weak and worn-out. He staggered on till he reached Leeds, and had there to take at once to the wretched bed in Mrs. Stubbs's cellar where the Rev. John, having been sent for, found him.

Here Archie found him, and could hardly recognise him—recognised him only when poor Tom at sight of him grinned the faintest reflection of an old smile which used to spread slowly over his face long ago, when Archie had ingeniously got him

him into—a smile expressive at once of relief, pleasure, and admiration. So smiling, Tom tried to rise into a sitting posture, but fell back through weakness, and through weakness began to cry quietly. Archie stood holding the wasted hand without speaking, for he couldn't speak. Till now he had known death by hearsay only, and he was struck dumb by the sight of it in a face so endeared to him, and so associated with all the exuberance of life, and all the rollicking memories of boyhood. Tom was the first to speak.

"Eh, Master Archie, but aw'm fain to see thee. Aw thowt aw'd niver see thee again, no more."

"I'm come to fetch you home, Tom," was all Archie could say.

"Aye; 'aw'm bahn hoam,* Master Archie."

"You'll mend up when you get back to the old place, Tom."

"Nay, there's nowt nobbut one road for me. Sithee,† Master Archie," holding up his arm, wasted to skin and bone, "aw've been pined, aw hev—that's where it is, aw've been pined."

"Oh, Tom!" groaned Archie, "and you never wrote to me."

Tom tried again to rise, this time to reach his coat, but again fell back, and Archie handed it to him. He felt feebly in one of the pockets of this ragged garment for a packet of letters, which he drew out at last, and held towards Archie with a hand which trembled as with palsy, even from so slight an exertion.

"Tha mind'st when tha used to mak' gam' on me, Master Archie, 'cos aw couldn't say my cat'chism and collec's off! Aw can say them off," pointing to the packet of Archie's letters, "ivery one on 'em, aw can. An' when aw've been liggin' aat, at neet, in t' rain, too cowld an' hungry to sleep, aw've said 'em all over to mysen for company like, an' thowt mysen back at 'ould place."

Here Tom gave way again to tears.

"If—if you'd only written, Tom," gasped Archie.

Tom wiped the blinding tears away with the back of his hand, to look solemnly and steadfastly at Archie, and see the effect upon him of what he was going to say.

"Aw couldn't fashion, Master Archie, 'cos aw'd been such a shocker‡—eh, aw hev been a shocker!"

* "Bahn hoam"—i.e. going to die.

† "Sithee"—i.e. look.

‡ "A shocker"—i.e. shockingly bad.

It was plainly the utmost relief to Tom to find that this disclosure did not check or chill Archie's sympathy, for he only took and pressed the hand Tom had held up to emphasise his confession.

"You should have written, Tom," said Archie once more; "you might have known I should have helped you whatever you were, and I dare say you were no worse than I've been myself."

"Eh, Master Archie, tha knaws nowt—nowt tha knaws. Aw'm noan fit to tak' thee by t' hond."

"Well, it's over and done with now, Tom, and you've paid terribly for it, poor fellow!"

This suggestion of an expiation of his involuntary penance seemed to comfort Tom a bit.

"Aw've been ooined* waur nor a mad dog, Master Archie. Aw've been that done wi' hunger that aw couldn't bide to stan', an' when aw've ligged me daan aw've been hunted like varmint thro' ditch to ditch, till aw'm done. T' doctor calls it faver, but it's run in aw am, an' reet; an' there's nowt but t' brush left for faver to tak'; there isn't."

A metaphor drawn from an old delight of Tom and Archie's, the neighbouring Bramham Moor Hunt. And in truth it was the hounds of hunger, exposure, and exhaustion which had really run him in and torn him to pieces, and left little but the name of his death for fever to claim.

Tom was one of those unfortunate tramps, of which there are a few, who, not being lost to shame, are the failures of the profession; "poor beggars!" the scorn both of the public and of their fellows, and inviting by their sheepishness the officious brutality of the police.

All he said of his sufferings was rather less than more than the truth, and what he said of his sickness was true also. He was dying of exhaustion accelerated by fever. This the doctor told Archie a few minutes after Tom himself had told it to him, and at the same time the doctor strictly forbade his being moved under pain of almost immediate death. Nothing could be done beyond making him as comfortable as they could in Mrs. Stubbs's cellar for the few hours of life that remained to him.

For these few hours of course Archie would stay with him; he would have stayed with him if the doctor had thought death less imminent. He had the deepest

affection for his old playmate, which poor Tom repaid with interest and compound interest. He worshipped Archie, and it was an inexpressible comfort to him to see him sitting by his bedside, and not merely because he loved Archie above every one, and prized his love above everything, but also for another reason. For more than a month past he had been scorned by every one as the very filth and off-scouring of the earth, and in this scorn he heard but the echo of his own conscience. Tom was not stronger than most of us—weaker rather—and like most of us his self-respect rose and sank with the respect of others. Therefore his self-abasement now was profound. But while the world scorned him for the crime of poverty, Tom interpreted its scorn as due to his other sins, and now that these sins had found him out and struck him down, and brought death near, he was deeply troubled in his conscience, and troubled for a curious reason. He had believed in his own way in the Rev. John's theory about the protective effects of his total immersion at birth in consecrated water; but his own way was a strange way, or would seem strange to those unversed in the mode in which many Christian sects will find any doctrine in any passage of the Bible. For Tom, in the midst and in the teeth of his headlong plunge into vice, still held in a muddle-headed way to the Rev. John's theory that he couldn't sin—i.e. that what would have been sin to others was not sin to him. Now, however, that he was plainly punished for his sins, and universally scorned, and in the grim grip of death, Tom took a diametrically opposite view of his immaculate immersion, and held that so far from being an absolution it was an aggravation of his guilt. Therefore, he clung now to Archie as a child in the horror of a great darkness clings to the hand of an elder brother.

On the doctor's departure Tom expressed bitter remorse for his past life, and then recurred to the sufferings of his tramp, making it evident to Archie that he regarded these as expiatory; but suddenly in the midst of a story of his brutal ill-treatment by a policeman who had hauled him before a magistrate for having slept under a haystack, he began to wander, his mind slipping back without a break, and as in sleep, to far-off days and scrapes. As in a dream the magistrate, in a moment, is transformed into Mrs. John, the prosecuting policeman into Mrs. Pybus, and Tom, a

* "Ooined"—i.e. harassed and harried.

child again, is telling his childish playmate, Archie, of his deliverance out of the old lady's hands.

"Eh, an' shoo did stan' up to t' ould lady, ye mind, Master Archie. 'He's been punished eneu,' shoo says, 'ye munnot forget, Mrs. Pybus,' shoo says, 'that he's nobbut a child and knaws no better.' An' then shoo turns to me, an' put her hand on my shoulder, and looks at me sorrowful-like, an' aw thowt shoo wor bahn to scold me, but shoo says nowt nobbut, 'Aw couldn't get thee aat before, Tom,' that wor all shoo said, 'Aw couldn't get thee aat before, Tom,' an' aw burst aat cryin', Master Archie, aw did, aw couldn't help it, shoo wor that forgivin'."

He appeared moved by the mere remembrance, and lay quite still with moistened eyes, which he closed after a little, seemingly in sleep. But he wasn't asleep, for when, a little later, Archie moved very quietly to reach a chair and set it to sit on near the bed, Tom opened his eyes and said in a startled way:

"Eh, aw'd lost mysen. What wor aw tellin' thee, Master Archie?"

"You were telling me, Tom, how you went wrong in Glasgow, and how you suffered for it, and how it reminded you of a scrape you got into long ago, when we were children together, and Mrs. Pybus had locked you up for it; but mother begged you off after a bit, saying you were punished enough, and were only a child and knew no better; and then mother put her hand on your shoulder, and when you thought she was going to scold you, she said only, 'I couldn't get you out before, Tom,' and you were so moved by her forgiveness that you burst out crying. I think, Tom," added Archie after a pause, during which Tom was taking in this his own reminiscence, as something of which he had no remembrance; "I think, Tom, you had it in your mind that God would be no less forgiving and forbearing than my mother."

Then Tom, in his weakness and yearning for something to grasp and to lean on, seemed to regard this story, not as his own, or as Archie's, or as an account of a real incident, but as an inspired parable sent him to draw from it what comfort he could.

"Shoo said I wor nobbut a child?"

"That you were only a child, and knew no better."

"An' that aw'd been punished eneu already?"

"Yes, Tom."

He remained silent for a little, interpreting this parable bit by bit. At last he said, looking anxiously at Archie:

"But aw did knaw better, Master Archie. Aw knew aw wor going t' wrang road. Aw'm noan a child nah, tha knaws."

"When you got into that old scrape, Tom, you knew you were doing wrong, and mother knew that you knew it, but she meant that allowances were to be made for a little child's weakness and thoughtlessness. I think we are all but little children in the eyes of God, Tom."

Tom thought a bit upon this, and tried to find in it what comfort he could. It wasn't much.

"It wor noan soa, Master Archie. It wor noan like a bairn that's in an' aat o' mischeef in a minute. It wor week in an' week aat wi' me till aw'd weared all t' brass* aw hed, or could raise on my bits o' things. But—eh, I wor punished! Shoo said I wor punished eneu, Master Archie?"

"Yes, Tom."

"I wor that. If aw'd an enemy who wor all spite, he wadn't ha' put me to more punishment."

"And she said she had set you free as soon as ever she could, Tom."

Tom mused a moment on this, and then made, after a pause, the unexpected reply:

"Aw'd gie t' world to see her, Master Archie."

A wish whose intensity was due in part to his loving and reverencing Mrs. John next to Archie in the world, and in part to his hope of being reassured of a higher forgiveness through obtaining hers.

"She's coming, Tom. She'll soon be here." And almost with the word she appeared, for Archie had sent at once for her, on hearing that Tom was not to be moved.

Mrs. John was as much shocked as Archie by Tom's appearance, but did not show it. She had a habit of self-suppression where the feelings of others were concerned and to be considered, and she did not yet know whether Tom had been told he had but a few hours to live. She soon knew it from Tom himself. Archie left them together, knowing that his mother was curate of Edgburn, and had had for years to do and deal with every case of temporal and spiritual trouble in the village. He left his mother, therefore,

* "Weared all t' brass"—i.e. spent all the money.

alone with Tom, just as he would have left the Rev. John alone with him, only with a greater certainty of spiritual benefit to the patient.

Then poor Tom told all the piteous tale of his sins and of his sufferings, as well as his weakness and his occasional wandering would allow him, and told also the story of his childish scrape, and how it seemed sent into his mind for his comfort and encouragement. Mrs. John put aside this feeble parable, and in its place read for Tom, as only she could read it, and explained for him, as only she could explain it, the parable of The Prodigal Son. We believe, at least, that no man could express in tones and words so steeped in love and pity all the yearning of this parable towards those whose divine hope has its source in tears, as the rainbow is painted upon the cloud. For Mrs. John was an adept in the art of conversion, which, indeed, is no art, no mere echo or reflection, like a painting, play, or poem, but the very divine love and pity themselves going out of our own hearts to run to meet and welcome the prodigal. Little wonder, then, that Mrs. John, speaking out of the depth of her own love and pity for Tom, brought the divine forgiveness home to his heart, to the perfect peace of his conscience.

When Archie returned, he insisted on his mother's going home at once, in part through fear of infection, and in part because of the foulness of the cellar and the lowness of the neighbourhood.

Mrs. John was very much affected in taking leave of Tom, whom she knew she would never see again in this world, but he himself seemed unconscious of the leave-taking. A great change had come over him in that hour of Archie's absence. Not only

His very face with change of heart was changed ;

was not now drawn and haggard as with physical pain ; but, besides this positive peace, and besides the passive peace of death stealing over it, over it also had stolen a bright look of happiness, replacing the shrinking expression of trouble and terror, as the clouds that obscure the sun one hour become in the next the glory of its setting.

But presently again he began to wander. He took no notice of Mrs. John when she pressed his hand for the last time, and in a broken voice bid him good-bye ; and long after she had left him he remained

unconscious of everything around, except, in a dim and indirect way, of Archie. He kept his eyes fastened on him with a wild and wistful gaze, and now and again his mind was plainly dwelling on him, for he repeated fragments of his letters, making upon them probably the very remarks he had made in those weary night-watches, when he lay out under the rain, sleepless with hunger and cold. Always in his wandering Archie was the centre of his thoughts, and the expression of his devotion to his old playmate in these his last moments would have been affecting even for a stranger to listen to—how much more to Archie himself ! Sometimes, with a dream-like confusion, he seemed at once to know that it was Archie he was looking at with that wide and child-like fixedness of gaze, and yet at the same time to speak of Archie to himself as if he were some third person. Then he would again repeat passages from the letters, and make remarks upon them, as though he were by himself, or with another than Archie : “ ‘ Dear Tom, I am very uneasy about you. Why don't you write ? Do write when you get this. I think sometimes you must be ill, or in want, or in trouble.’ Eh, what wad he think by me if he seed me nah ? ” feeling with his right hand his left arm, as though it were soaked with rain. “ He wor that tender, tha knaws,” addressing Archie as though he were a third person ; “ he wor that tender, tha knaws, that he couldn't bide to see a ratton ooined, as aw've been ooined, for aw've been clemmed,* tha sees,” holding up his wasted arm. “ Ay, aw've been clemmed. An' aw tell thee what aw'm moast afeard on,” raising himself on his elbow, in the strength of the excitement of fever, and looking with intense earnestness at Archie. “ Aw'm afeard aw'll be fun' deead in a ditch afore aw can reach Leeds, an' then aw'll niver see him agin no more—niver no more ! ” falling back upon his pillow with a piteous moan. There he remained quite still for a bit, while Archie forced some brandy between his lips. Whether this conquered his weakness, to which in part his wandering was due, or whether it was the lightning before death, Tom came slowly again to himself. He looked wistfully round the room, after his first glance at Archie, and said then :

“ Shoo's goan ! ”

“ Yes ; she had to go, Tom. She bid

* “ Clemmed ”—i.e. starved.

you good-bye, but you had lost yourself a bit, and didn't notice."

"Master Archie," he said solemnly, "ye mun tell her that aw'm noan flayed* nah. Aw'm forgi'en, aw am; aw seed it in her face."

Poor Tom's faith in his absolution was not, perhaps, as ill-founded as it seems at first sight. If he could have stated it logically, it would probably have taken this form. That as no author could put into a book more brains than he had in his head; no painter into a picture more beauty than he had in his mind; no composer into an anthem more music than he had in his soul; so God could not have put into Mrs. John's heart more love than He had in his own heart. For it was Mrs. John's face and voice that interpreted to him the parable better even than her words.

"I'll tell her, Tom."

"Ay, tell her aw seed it in her face, and aw shall knaw t' face of t' angels by it."

Then he lay still a little, with that expression of serene happiness in his face Archie remarked just before Mrs. John left and before he began to wander. Presently he said, looking with yearning affection at Archie:

"An' aw've see thee agin," meaning that the one other thing, without which he couldn't have died happy, had also been granted to him.

"I did all I could to find you, Tom," said Archie, wishing naturally that Tom should know before he died how his affection had been returned. "I wrote again and again to you. I wrote to your employers to ask about you. I advertised for you in the newspapers."

"Nay!" an exclamation of surprise and pleasure. "But aw thowt tha'd think a bit on me. An' tha'lt think a bit on me when aw'm goan, Master Archie. Aw'd like to lig where tha canst see t' grave from thee room, an' think o' me, happen."†

"Yes, Tom," with a choking sob.

"Near t' road to schooil, Master Archie. Shoo tak's that way ivery morning, tha knaws."

"Shoo," was, of course, Mrs. John, who passed each morning by a short cut through the churchyard to take a class in the day-school. There was silence again for some time, for Tom, whose breathing had become more and more laboured, and

his voice weaker and weaker, seemed exhausted, while Archie couldn't speak for tears.

Presently Tom, trying to raise himself on his elbow, but falling back in the effort, cried out in a startled whisper:

"Master Archie!"

"Yes, Tom."

"Eh, aw thowt tha'd goan. It's so murk, aw cannot see thee. Tha mun gi'e me thee hond, Master Archie." Then, as Archie held his hand, he added, speaking in gasps, and using a whole breath for each syllable: "Aw'm—noan—flayed—but—it's—awesome—lonely. Aw'd—like—them—let-ters—wi'—me—them—let-ters," looking up at Archie with eyes that did not now see, and yet with an intense wistfulness in their gaze.

In this desire to have Archie's letters buried with him was there, besides his love for Archie, a dim Scythian idea that in the awful loneliness of the journey before him, the letters might be to him the company they had been to him in his lonely tramp!

There might possibly be an undefined notion of this sort in a mind dulled to dreaminess by weakness and the numbing chill of death.

For, when Archie had mastered his voice to answer, Tom was dead.

TRAVELS IN THE EAST.

PART VI.

"AND now," said I, on quitting the mother of the dustman's wife, engaged upon her Sisyphean task of tidying up; "and now I want to see the home of one of the poor matchbox-makers, for I have heard they are the worst paid of all the very ill-paid workers in the East."

"Have then thy wish!" my guide might have replied, had he been given to quote poetry. But being more business-like, he simply said: "All right;" and without leaving the court where the dustman had his home, we found the other home whereof I was in quest.

The room was on the ground, and was of the same smallness—I can hardly call it size—as most of the apartments, or dwellings, one may term them, we had previously seen. The walls were full of cracks and blotches bare of plaster. What their colour once had been it was not easy to determine, for all their surface was absorbed by a prevailing hue of dirt. The ceiling, too, seemed mostly made to match the walls, both in regard to falling plaster

* "Flayed"—i.e. afraid.

† "Happen"—i.e. perhaps.

and all-pervading griminess, and dinginess, and dust. The bare floor was half-covered by a worn-out wooden bedstead, which, in the way of bed, had nothing but the sack-ing stretched across whereon the mattress should have lain; together with a little hay or straw, or fodder of some sort—it was certainly not feathers—stuffed limply into what might once have held potatoes, but was far too shrunk and meagre in dimension to be likened to Jack Falstaff's "intolerable quantity of sack."

A widowed knife without a fork; a wedded pair of teaspoons, as different in size as many married couples, but bearing each a sadly worn and battered look; a brace or two of cups, estranged from their own saucers and mated to others which did not appear to match; some half-a-dozen plates, that were generally cracked; and a teapot which was leading a terribly loose life, in so far as touched its handle and its lid—these were the only signs, visible and outward, of anything like eating or sitting down to meals. Sitting down, indeed, would have been a little difficult, except in Turkish fashion by squatting on the floor, for there were only a couple of chairs, and one was serving as a work-stool, and was covered with paste and paper, while the other seemed an invalid, and was propped against the wall, as though weak in the legs or injured in the back.

By the door stood a small table with strips of thin wood ranged upon it, together with a pair of very venerable scissors, and more paper, and more paste. Beside a tiny fire there stood a little pile of boxes, made for holding night-lights, which were doing their very best to be dried by the small heat. Near them sat erect, as though a sentinel on guard, a sharp-eyed, grey-and-white, suspicious-looking cat. Except, perhaps, the paste-pot, which was valuable for business, there was little household property worth the care to watch. But pussy kept her eye on us, as though prepared to make a pounce, like a policeman on a burglar, if she detected the least symptoms of nefarious design.

On a shelf by the chimney lay a bit or two of crockery, made less for use than ornament, and of little use for that. Conspicuous in the centre, and kept doubtless as a relic of departed days of comfort, stood a large two-handled mug of not quite modern make. A dealer might have bought it for a shilling at a sale, or possibly for sixpence if sold by private contract.

and very likely afterwards have labelled it "Old Staffordshire," and have allowed some young collector to acquire it as "a bargain," say, for half-a-guinea, or failing the collector, have eventually sold it, in a spasm of generosity, for the sum of three half-crowns. The only other sign of luxury, departed from the dwelling with departed better times, was apparent in a leash of tiny little cages, suspended near the ceiling, which was hardly more than six feet from the floor. There was, however, nothing moving in these small Bastilles. The little prisoners had all been sold, and perhaps it was as well for them, or else they might have starved.

While we were surveying this sad scene of desolation, its mistress returned suddenly, and gave a feeble echo, being somewhat out of breath, to the greeting of my guide. She was very thinly clothed, but with some slight show of mourning. On her head she wore a something which might once have been a bonnet, but could hardly make pretence of having kept its normal shape. Her face was very pale, and her hands were thin and shaking, and, as she spoke, there seemed to be a shiver in her voice. Wrapped under her old shawl she carried a small bottle, to fetch which, she told us, she had been to the hospital. She was an out-patient, for her cough was very bad. It was "shaking the life out of her," she quiveringly declared.

Pitiably sad was the story of her life, and her present way of living—or shall I say of dying? After every dozen words or so she paused to gasp for breath, and held her hand pressed to her side, as if in frequent pangs of pain. She had been left a widow less than fifteen months ago; her husband, a dock-labourer, having died in the infirmary at Bromley; and her grown-up son and daughter, who were living with her then, had been living with her since. The son pursued the same profession as his father, and found it full of workers and not so full of work. To help to pay the rent (which for their one room was two and threepence weekly), and to buy such food and clothing as the son failed to provide, the daughter with her mother worked at making match-boxes, or, when she got a chance, sold watercress or flowers, which she was doing when we called.

The poor widow confessed that the match-box manufacture was not a paying trade. The poor people who worked at it were rewarded for their labour at the rate

of twopence-farthing for each completed gross. That was the gross price, if I may venture so to term it; but the net amount received was actually less. Taskmasters of old had declined providing straw for the poor who slaved at brickmaking, and merchants nowadays demanded of the poor who made their match-boxes that they should provide the paste. The cost of the materials was little, it was true, but time was wasted in the making, and time was rather precious when counted in the price. Fire too was required both for the making of the paste and for the drying of the boxes after they were made. But, these drawbacks notwithstanding, twopence-farthing for twelve dozen was the liberal rate of payment, and on the same scale of munificence was the wage for making night-light boxes, although upon the whole the work was rather harder, the boxes being longer and being made with lids.

I enquired of what disease it was her husband died. "Same as I'm a-doing—Starvation," she replied a little grimly, with a gasp that added emphasis to the plainness of her speech. "I've had no food since Sunday," she proceeded to observe; and, mind, it was on Wednesday that we heard the observation. Being a little startled, I questioned her more closely. Perhaps her memory was faulty, or perhaps she tried to make the worst of her sad plight. But all she could remember was a cup or two of tea—the last pinch they had left—and a morsel of dry bread scarce big enough to bite.

"And we've sold everything we've got a'most. Excep' the bed we're lying on. And there ain't much o' that. Not as many 'ud care to buy. But there, God's good, they say. He'll help us yet maybe. I trust in Him, I do. But I'm a'most past His help."

All this was said in gasps, with a dry cough now and then, that well-nigh choked her utterance; and with a quiver in her figure and a quaver in her voice. If she were acting, as Mr. Bumble might suggest, she certainly bade fair to shine upon the stage, and might "star" it in the provinces with great prospect of success.

I questioned her about her husband, and the causes of his illness.

"He worked mostly at the docks," she said, "and we got on pretty comfor'able. But there come a baddish time, an' he couldn't get no work sca'ce, an' he got weak for want o' food. An' then he caught a chill a waitin' in the wet. So he went to

the infirney, an' lay there till he died. Day arter Christmas Day—merry Christmas as they calls it. We wasn't very merry with him there lying dead, and we'd nothin' much to eat."

From further information, elicited in gasps, I learned some ghastly details as to the death which had occurred, and the days that had elapsed before the funeral took place. The body, it appeared, had been sent home in a "shell," for the widow wished, if possible, to avoid a parish burial, having perhaps heard of the grim chorus of the song:

Rattle his bones

Over the stones,

He's only a pauper whom nobody owns.

So her son got up a "Lead" (pronounced to rhyme with "need"), which, as she explained, was a meeting of their friends and neighbours, who were privately invited to subscribe towards a private burial. They, however, were so poor that only forty shillings was, in pennies and in sixpences, collected at the "Lead," and this being less than half the undertaker's lowest charge, she was reluctantly compelled, after fifteen days of waiting, to seek for parish help.

"But," I could not resist enquiring, "did he—did the shell remain here all this while?"

"Yes," replied the widow, gasping as before. "It stood here upon trestles, just where you're a stan'in', an' me an' my daughter slep' beside it on the bed, and her brother slep' beside it down there on the floor. No, we never saw no doctor, nor no Sanitaray 'Spectre, nor we didn't want to. They all'ys make a fuss, an' quarrels, too, like cats. Leastways so they say. But I don't know much about 'em, though I don't think they're much good."

To change this painful subject, I pointed to the plaster which was peeling from the walls, and falling from the ceiling, and I asked her when she thought the landlord would repair the room.

"Haven't got no landlord," was the answer. "She's a lady. Leastways so they calls her. She's a 'ard 'un, she is. Lives down in the Dog Road, nigh to The Blind Beggar. Yes, that's a public'ouse. Reg'lar 'ard 'un, she is. Told me on'y yest'day if rent worn't paid to-morrer she'd put my things out in the street. An' God knows how I'm to pay it, if my son don't get a job."

She said this, not complainingly, but as though stating a plain fact. There was

no covert appeal to us for charity, nor sly glance to see if we were moved by her sad story; that sharp but furtive look which a beggar by profession often finds a useful guide in framing his next speech. Mr. Ebenezer Scrooge, before the hour of his conversion, might have sworn that she was shamming, and have buttoned up his pockets in a fit of righteous wrath at her manifest imposture and mendicant attempt. But after seeing the three Spirits, Mr. Scrooge, if he had listened while the widow told her story, would no doubt have done as I did, and relieved her of the fear of being turned into the street.

Just as the poor widow was ending her sad story, and with trembling hands had resumed her ill-paid work, we were cheered by the arrival of a sturdy little girl, with bright brown eyes, and hair all towzled by the wind, and some out-door-grown and healthy-looking roses on her cheeks. She wore a very shabby dress, but had good thick shoes to her feet. Brisk in manner, if not brusque, and speaking in short sentences, she seemed as if she had much business on her hands, and her voice, like her hair, was roughened, as it were, by exposure in the streets.

She had been out selling a few "creeses," she informed us, and had now returned to look after the children, and to finish washing a few "things" of theirs, and some of her papa's. But for her mentioning the children in this maternal manner, I might have foolishly mistaken her for being one of them herself. My guide, however, with due deference, addressed her as "Little Mother," which she apparently accepted as her rightful title. Being delicately questioned on the subject of her age, she owned to being sixteen, but confessed the age was counted from her birthday in next August; for young ladies love to reckon a few months in advance.

As I wished to hear a little of her ways and means of life, she invited me politely, albeit a little gruffly, to visit her at home. So we bade adieu to the poor widow, and followed Little Mother up some steep and narrow stairs, to the unusual altitude of an Eastern second floor. Entering a low doorway, we stood in a small room of barely seven feet in height. This chamber formed the home of Little Mother and three children and their father, whose wife, we learned, had died in "the dark days before Christmas" last, which certainly had not been brightened by her death. Father was nursing baby during Little

Mother's absence, a poor, pale, sad-eyed baby, wrapped in an old threadbare shawl, and carried tenderly in his arms with never a whine nor whimper, the while father walked about.

Squatting on the floor was a white-faced little boy, half dressed in a blue jersey, with patches in the sleeves, which scarcely reached below the elbow. He wore, likewise, some blue "small clothes," which were worthy of their name, for they reached hardly to the knee, and showed a longish bit of bare leg over a bare foot. In the absence of a lollipop or piece of barley-sugar, he was employed in sucking his thumb with amazing perseverance. I asked him what his name was, and his father answered "Henry," the boy having his mouth too full of thumb to make an audible reply.

Father was clean-shaven and tidy in his appearance, though he had not much to boast of in the matter of attire. He spoke very civilly, in rather a weak voice, and his cheeks bore out the notion of his being underfed. He was a costermonger by profession, but wasn't no ways pertickler. Go anywheres he would, and do anything a'most, if so be as he could earn an honest penny by his work. To-day he'd been acrost the river to the Commercial Docks, having heerd there were a ship in, and a prospec' of a job. But bless him, though he got there afore six, there was scores of 'em a-waiting; and after all it worn't no go, 'cause the ship hadn't come in yet. And that was about the way of it, 'most everywheres it was. "If there's ever such a little bit o' work a-wantin' to be done, there's hunderds of 'em flocks to it. And it's 'ard lines on a chap as have got his mouth to fill, and four little uns beside, too. Not so very little neither, leastways some of them there mouths ain't." This he added with a smile as he looked at Little Mother, who, however, was too busy at her wash-tub to notice the small sarcasm her papa cast in her teeth.

Two shillings and threepence a week was the rent of his small room, which was higher from the ground and lower in its ceiling than any I had seen. Some floor-boards were loose, and when trodden on abruptly seemed to threaten a descent into the chamber underneath. There was not a scrap of carpet to hide any defects, nor were there any photographs or cheap pictures on the walls to conceal their want of paint. There was a wooden bedstead, with the usual Eastern bedding of some huddled bits of sacking: and there were a

table and a chair or two, with a stool, whereon the wash-tub was conspicuously placed. A large stain on the ceiling betrayed a leaky roof, and in the small window I saw two broken panes.

"They're Master Suckthumb's doing," said his father in apology. "He's to blame for them there breakages, he is. Broke 'em with his ball, he did. He were a'most all'ys a chuckin' it about whensoever me an' Molly worn't upon the watch. If they's left ever to themselves, boys is all'ys up to mischief. And one must leave 'em a while when one's got to arn some grub for 'em. You can't well be at home an' be out, too, that's for sartin."

"Well, yes," cried I, correcting him, "you may be at home, you know, and yet be out of temper. But I think you're too good-humoured to be ever out of that," I added with a smile, for indeed he looked the picture of contentment and good-nature, as he briskly walked about with the baby in his arms. He seemed to relish my small joke, and gave a little laugh as he repeated it to Little Mother at the tub. She was far too busy to indulge in idle laughter, but she deigned to listen gravely, and appeared to comprehend the purport of the jest.

Enquiry being put why father had not gone to morning-service for many Sundays past—"Why, how can I?" he replied, "when I haven't got no coat. I've on'y this old jacket, which it ain't fit to be seen in, special of a Sunday. I'd be willin' enough to come, but I'd like to look respectable. An' with them little uns to feed, I really can't afford it. Beside, there's baby to be nussed, an' he's gittin' a bit 'eavyish, an' Molly can't be all'ys mindin' him, you know. So I has to take my turn at it; an' Molly works so 'ard o' week days, she ought to rest a bit o' Sunday. Why, when she's a sellin' creeses, she must be early at the market, an' that's nigh Obun way, you know, an' a tidy tramp from 'ere that is. She've to get there afore five, an' some mornin's afore four, an' she'll 'ave to be afoot a' times till six or seven a' night, if so be she ain't no luck. But it's a goodish trade is creeses. When I finds I've 'arf-a-crownd as I can spare her for a spec, she'll make it nigh to double by investin' it in creeses."

The conversation taking a commercial turn, I was able to acquire some further knowledge of the match trade. Little Mother had worked at it, for lack of better labour; and had not merely made the

boxes, but had filled them with their matches—first, with a fixed knife, cutting all of these to fit. For this two-fold operation she had received, upon the average, threepence, or it might be, three-pence-farthing, for four dozen boxes filled. "Starting work at seven punctual," as her father phrased it, and working pretty reg'lar till nigh on eight at night, she had contrived to earn as much as four shillings a week. She had even heard of workers who could weekly earn a crown; but they must keep tightish at it, and be most uncommon handy with their fingers, she opined, and not given much to gab.

Little Mother condescending to join us in our talk, I put a shilling in her hand, just wet out of the wash-tub, and asked if she could read what was impressed upon the coin. She frankly answered, "No," for she had "never gone to school. Never had the time," she added with some briskness, to which her father by a nod in silence signified assent. She knowed it were a shilling though, she proceeded to observe, and she knowed how many bundles of creeses she could buy with it, and how much she could sell 'em for, if she had any luck. She seemed sadly posed, however, when I propounded the old problem which had puzzled me in youth; anent the herring and a half that could be bought for just threehalfpence, and the number left indefinite to be purchased for elevenpence; the terms of buying being similar in either case of sale. Reduction being made in the estimate demanded, at length, by rather slow degrees, her father prompting audibly, she succeeded in stating a solution of the problem; and she seemed very much relieved when, at my suggestion, she had pocketed the shilling which had caused such needless trouble to her mind.

I shook hands with Little Mother on wishing her farewell, and a good issue of her wash. I was likewise honoured with a shake by Master Suckthumb, who by a superhuman effort had succeeded in extracting his digit from his lipa. He seemed rather in low spirits; possibly from taking thought about the broken window, which his father had recalled to him; or about the ball which he had lost in consequence of that lamented fracture, and which in his dearth of things to play with was doubtless a sad loss. He cheered up a little when I produced a penny, and suggested that perhaps he might buy another ball with it. But paternal wisdom hinted that another pane might suffer; and

so a peg-top was proposed and cheerfully accepted, on condition that the pegging should be done on the pavement of the court.

Another half-mile walk, and half-hour's visit at the end of it, both of which I may, perhaps, describe hereafter, brought to a conclusion my second Eastern travel; which, on the whole, had saddened me more than the first. Again I entered the Cathedral, in my tramp through the City, and found the white-robed little choir-boys busied in their Lenten service, and musically chanting in a plaintive minor key. In the pauses of their singing the roar of the street traffic beat upon the ear, and recalled me to the scenes of life and labour I had left. How peaceful seemed that haven, where all sat at their ease, and where no signs were visible of misery and want! And then there came the thought that the poor were "always with us," though the want of decent clothing might keep them out of church. And there came, too, the remembrance, reverential and refreshing, that the finest of all sermons was preached chiefly to the poor: who, with the promise of a share in the kingdom of heaven, were rightly and divinely accounted to be blessed.

PATIENCE.

HOLD thou mine hand, beloved, as we sit
 Within the radiance of our winter fire,
 Watching the dainty shadows as they flit
 On wall and ceiling, as the flames leap higher.
 Hold thou mine hand, beloved, with the calm
 Close clasp of love assur'd and at rest,
 And let the peace of home, a blessed balm,
 Fall on us, folding faithful breast to breast.
 Hold thou mine hand, beloved, while I speak
 Of all thy love hath done and borne for me,
 The stronger soul supporting still the weak,
 The good hand giving royally and free;
 The tender heart that put man's roughness by,
 To wipe weak tears from eyes too seldom dry.
 I touch this thing and that, thy pretty gifts,
 The silver zone, the jewell'd finger-ring,
 The outward symbols of a love that lifts
 My fate and me beyond life's buffeting.
 Yet, oh, thrice generous giver! there remains
 A thing for which I have not thanked thee yet,
 Thy patience—through the long years with their
 pains—
 Thy patience with my weakness and regret.
 Ah, let me thank thee now with falling tears,
 Tears of great joy, and deep, serene content,
 And God be thanked that through the weary years
 We saw together ere our lives were blent,
 Although the years were desolate and long,
 Thy patience matched thy love, and both were
 strong!

POISONOUS REPTILES AND INSECTS OF INDIA.

IN TWO PARTS. PART I.

It is during the rainy season, beginning with July and ending with September, that the insect and reptile life of India is

in full force; when the steaming heat has evoked a sudden burst of intense vegetation which the scorching drought of the previous three months has kept dormant. Then also these lower forms of the animal creation, as if hitherto dormant from the same cause, burst into sudden and redoubled life. Each patch of the almost visibly growing grass teems with multitudes of insects, whose ephemeral life seems to begin and end with the season, or may conceal reptiles harmless or noxious to man. Each footstep has now more than ever to be watched against the chance of lighting at any time upon a dangerous reptile.

Among the daily and familiar signs of the insect and reptile life of India, water-snakes, harmless in bite, may be seen swimming about in pools of water, rejoicing in the frogs which these supply, or along the margins of lakes with heads just showing above the surface; droves of frogs may be seen trooping up your verandah-steps as if intoxicated with the shower of rain, to be ignominiously shot out again by chaukeedar or sweeper standing guard over the doors; wasps and large fierce hornets pounce upon every unprotected eatable; dark clouds of the house-fly, now swelled to numbers easily to suggest a plague, contest possession of the breakfast-table; ants large and small defile in long columns down the walls of your room, exploring fresh country or establishing communication between their nest and an unprotected sugar-bowl; hunting-spiders are stalking flies on the glass doors opening on your verandah; lizards perchance are stalking the spiders themselves, or other flies on the wall; splendid ichneumon-flies dart in and out of your room, making minute examinations of your furniture, or dragging live caterpillars or huge spiders up to their little mud cells along the edge of your bookcase; bees of both species, wild and domesticated, and of various sizes of each, from no bigger than a house-fly, pursue their flight to and from their nests in the densest foliage of the trees. As darkness falls the various beetles huge and small, moths, and multitudes of noisome insects that wing their noisy way through the night air, and strike in showers upon your face, take up the tale; and the mosquitoes, true beasts of prey, minute but savage, emerge from the folds of your door-curtains to prey upon yourself, and make the air once more alive with their hostile buzz.

Chief among reptiles of India, as else-

where, is the snake, and among the snakes of India, the cobra is most dreaded and deadly. Third in order of virulence is the krait, and as this and the cobra are most commonly to be met with of the poisonous varieties, I will chiefly allude to them. Of these two the cobra, by reason of its nature to bite from the pure love of attacking, is by far the most dreaded and fatal. They are both partial to dry places, such as hollows of trees, etc., and also find suitable quarters in the mud and thatch houses of the bulk of the native population. The cobra reaches a length of five feet, and is of a light brown shade, which alone distinguishes it from other snakes, but added to this is the ominous fan-shaped hood, with its black horse-shoe mark, which it distends from its neck when angry, and which singles it out from every variety. It has besides a fierce and venomous look peculiarly its own, as if indicating at once its nature and its own consciousness of power. The krait, on the other hand, is jet-black, with pure white bands, and attains even a greater length, but does not possess either the venomous look of the cobra or its destructive propensity. The eggs of the krait I have repeatedly come across in old cellars or beneath masses of lumber, as large as big hen-eggs, white and soft, but never have I found those of the cobra.

The European is not long in the country without making acquaintance with one or the other of these snakes, and generally when least expected or desired. Indeed, the marvel of most Anglo-Indians after leaving the country is how they have weathered so many hairbreadth escapes, and are still extant to tell the tale; especially so, when they recall the very familiar remembrance of the numbers of their darker brethren who succumbed all around them to snake-bite. This immunity they attribute a good deal to the constant presence in their bungalows of one or more pet dogs, who are generally to be found beside their master's beds at night, sharing along with them the cooling breeze of the punkah. My first acquaintance with a cobra was one night when, awoke by a loud barking, rising half up in bed I saw through the open door of the adjoining bath-room where the night-light burned, my two terriers barking furiously in full battle front of a large cobra that was reared on its tail and facing them in turn. It was motionless except for a slow swaying of the head, its hood was distended to a com-

plete circle, its tongue darted in and out, while every now and again it emitted a loud hissing sound (which at first had made me think of jungle-cats); but never once did it show trace of fear, or remove from the dogs the fierce, fascinating stare that seemed to rouse them to frenzy, as they kept advancing and retreating, but still carefully outside the danger-line. Fearing their wrath might get the better of their discretion, I leaped hastily up and dispatched the reptile with a stick; when the dogs, no longer dreading their enemy, vented their rage on his inanimate body. I remembered that during the day I had been surprised while taking my bath at the dogs silently and persistently snuffing around an old trunk in the bath-room, and that not in their usual way when a rat or mouse was in the question, but took little notice of it at the time, though it was in front of this trunk the snake was reared, and I have no doubt it was him they scented. I had to thank them, in this instance at least, for the timely warning. Dogs, however, will never attack a cobra at bay. Their instinct seems to apprise them of the risk.

During the dry months preceding the rains, the cobra and krait often make their haunts among the numerous rat-burrows, where they find temporary head-quarters and a food-supply in the intercepted rats. From mistaking the occupant of a burrow, the lower castes of Hindoos, who, like the Chinese, are very partial to field-rats as an occasional delicacy, sometimes get bitten. An instance of the kind came within my own notice. The ground around a large tamarind-tree fronting my bungalow, where the horses were wont to get their daily feed of oats—a custom to prevent the bulk of it going to the bazaar for the syce's benefit—had got very much cut up by rats, which had been attracted there by the stray grains, and were extending their raids to the bungalow; so I sent word to the nooneas, who had long cast wistful eyes on the spot. After digging out some five or six nests, and unearthing about thirty rats—the terriers finding delightful sport in accounting for them as quickly as they appeared—they were digging out another burrow, and had come near the end by the indication of signs familiar to them, when as usual one of them inserted a hand to bring out the rats single file, and so prevent their emerging in a body, and some, perhaps, escaping. In an instant the man, with a terrified yell, drew back his hand with a

cobra clinging to it. The reptile had seized his finger, but was dispatched immediately, and a rapid incision with a penknife and canterbury with a hot iron in the bitten part, along with a tight ligature above that, saved the man's life. Beyond a heavy drowsiness as from a strong dose of opium, owing, no doubt, to the very minute particle of the poison that had permeated his system from the moment's delay, he experienced no further ill effects.

A source of great annoyance occurs when a cobra gets into a fowl-house, where it makes terrible havoc, seeming to destroy from the pure love of destroying, and coming back again and again to swell the number of its victims. It is no uncommon thing to find half-a-dozen fowls lying dead each morning.

Finding mine once getting diminished in this wholesale fashion, and having vainly shut up all the holes in the fowl-house that might shelter an enemy, I resolved to keep watch one evening just after dusk, at which time the servants said they had more than once caught a glimpse of a snake disappearing near the fowl-house. Hardly had I reached the wicker enclosure outside, when something glided in between my feet, which I barely managed to avoid by a leap, and towards which, lowering the gun, I fired. On the smoke clearing I was just able to distinguish in the dark the head of a snake rearing up and beating the ground alternately, which told me my shot must have been successful. The arrival of a light confirmed this by disclosing a large cobra cut nearly in two by the charge. He was evidently the marauder, as the mortality among my fowls ceased from that moment, except through the legitimate medium of the cook.

The great mortality among natives from snake-bites in the absence of almost a single case among Europeans, seems to speak its own tale. It is chiefly among the poorer classes and agriculturists, who form the bulk of the population, that snake-bites occur; those whose daily struggle for bread subjects them to constant risk and exposure from which their more fortunate brethren are exempt.

Their thatch and mud houses, with walls often honeycombed by rats, afford a natural shelter to the cobra and krait. The want of light in their houses by night when nine-tenths of the snake-bites occur; a footstep in the dark; a hand or foot resting over the edge of their low charpoys during sleep—an irresistible temptation to a

prowling cobra; the accidental striking or seizure by the hand of a snake while cutting their crops, and crop-watching by night; are among the most common occasions of snake-bite. Often so slight is the bite on finger or toe that it is not enough to break sleep, and thus the sleep of life gradually and unconsciously merges into that of death. The poison seems to steal insensibly and painlessly through the system, gradually benumbing the springs of life, till it brings them to a standstill for ever. Nor is there anything left to tell the cause except the minutest speck, like a flea-bite, only visible to a close examination. In the morning the bitten person may be found either dead or in the last stage of snake-bite poisoning; it may be a dead mother with her living child still clinging to her, drinking in, in the milk, the poison which, even in such a minute quantity, also leaves the child dazed and lethargic for many hours to come. Strange to say, so apathetic are natives that often they get bitten and go to sleep again, without thinking more about it, on the frail chance of the bite being non-poisonous, and so sleep on till their friends find them, or sleep ceases in death. One, among many instances of snake-bite poisoning I have seen, was a strong young Brahmin of twenty, well-known to me, who had been bitten during the night while watching his maize crop. Ere I knew of it they had brought him into my compound in front of the bungalow. As yet he walked quite steadily, only leaning slightly on the arm of another man. There was that peculiar drowsy look in his eyes, however, as from a strong narcotic, which indicated his having been bitten for some time, and left but little room for hope now. He could still clearly tell me particulars. He had been bitten, he said, on putting his foot to the ground while moving off his charpoy in the dark, but, thinking the bite was that of a non-poisonous snake, had given no more heed to the matter, and gone to sleep again, till he was awake by his friends coming in search of him. With some difficulty I was able to find the bite—very faint, no larger than the prick from a pin, but still the unmistakable double mark of the poison-fangs. He felt the poison, he said, gradually ascending the limb, and pointed to a part just above the knee, where he felt it had already reached, the limb below that being, he said, benumbed, and painless to the touch, like the foot when “asleep.” I gave him the usual

remedies, and kept him walking to and fro, but gradually his limbs seemed to be losing their power of voluntary motion, and his head was beginning to droop from the overpowering drowsiness that was surely gathering over him. At intervals he pointed out the poison-line steadily rising higher, and was still able to answer questions clearly on being roused. At length it seemed to be of no use torturing him further by keeping him moving about, and he was allowed to remain at rest. Shortly after this, while being supported in a sitting posture, all at once, without any premonitory sign, he gave one or two long sighs, and life ceased, about an hour after he had himself walked into the compound. There was something terribly real in this faculty of pointing out each stage of the ascending poison (as the snake-bitten patient always can) that was gradually bringing him nearer and nearer to death, with the prospect of only another hour or half-hour of life remaining to him; and yet the patient does not seem to realise this with the keenness that an onlooker does, probably from the poison benumbing at the same time the powers of the mind as well as of the body.

The native remedy—it is needless to say there is no cure but immediate excision or cauterisation—consists partly in some herb mixture administered internally, but chiefly in witchcraft; and one of their hopes of recovery rests in not killing the snake that has bitten them. This, if done, would, they believe, be next to sealing their fate, and so the enemy, instead of receiving his deserts, escapes unharmed, to repeat his attack when the next opportunity offers. Strangely opposed to this is the native belief regarding the bite of a mad dog—so terribly prevalent in India, where so many mangy half-fed dogs and over-gorged jackals prowl the country—which they rest quite satisfied must prove harmless if the dog is immediately killed. This superstition, by the way, is not confined to India, but even prevails among the labouring classes at home. When a person is bitten by a snake, the first thing done is to “anoint his head with oil,” as in each and every native ailment. Then an individual skilled in witchcraft, whose spells are known to be most potent, is easily procured from a neighbouring village. Thereupon, the patient is seated amid a gathering crowd of natives, including one or two Brahmins to recite aloud their “shastras,” and the sorcerer begins his spells. Seizing the

patient's hand, he rattles over, in a loud and rapid voice, certain incantative phrases which are supposed to fight the demon of the poison, and ever and anon, as, despite his spells, the poison seems to be gaining way, he rouses himself to fury, dashes over the man a white powder (supposed to be sand from the sacred Ganges), and shouts, threatens, and rages at the rebellious spirit which persists in defying him. All this mummary at length fails. The man gradually sinks in the presence of his relatives, and dies in their hands, perhaps two or three hours after being bitten. The noisy jabber of the sorcerer and drawling chant of the Brahmins suddenly give place to a dead stillness, to be broken presently by the loud wail of the female relatives from the village. Should the bite, as is frequently the case, chance to be, unknowingly, from a non-poisonous snake, the sorcerer, of course, takes full credit for the recovery, and obtains corresponding renown. Perhaps, before a fatal termination, the relatives, losing faith in the sorcerer, may, as a last resource, seek European aid, or the more enlightened may have done so at an earlier stage. In this case the European cauterises, if possible, the wound, and administers a dose of strong ammonia or eau-de-luce internally, with a glass of brandy at intervals, and insists on the patient being kept moving, to fight against the drowsiness and gradual stagnation of the blood which seem the prominent features of the poisoning. The latter may assist the cauterising, but it is certain that alone it would fail in saving life where the bite from a cobra or krait in full vigour is concerned, which hitherto has baffled all medical science for an antidote. Injections of ammonia into the blood have also been tried, and though in a degree more efficacious than the internal administration, have equally been found to fail.

Snake-poison can easily be collected from the gland at the base of the poison-fangs, which is large, readily found, and contains it plentifully. These fangs, by the way, are only to be found in poisonous snakes, and are two long, hollow, curved teeth in the centre of the upper jaw, which much exceed the others in length, and through which the poison during a bite is driven into the wound by pressure upon the gland from the fang. Possibly, however, these snakes may have the power of either dispensing with the use of the fangs by depression, or restraining the action of the gland except when wanted, as seems

probable. In the case of non-poisonous snakes the teeth are an even row, much smaller in size. The facility of obtaining so deadly a poison, and one so utterly beyond detection as a poisoning medium by any known medical or chemical tests, would make it a terrible weapon for evil—one, possibly, which has too often figured as a means of removing political obstacles in India, and which may account for many of those mysterious deaths that from time to time have characterised private life among the natives of that country, and which even still, under cover of the zenana and of the effacing medium of cremation—the Hindoo funeral rite following death within an hour or two—are said to be much more frequent than is publicly known.

In experimenting with snake-poison I have repeatedly tested the comparative effect from the bite of a live cobra and from that injected from a glass capillary collected from the gland of the dead reptile, and have found the result nearly similar, varying only in proportion to the amount of the injection. A large cobra that was intercepted while crossing the compound in full march for the fowl-house, and stood at bay within a piece of wicker-work surrounding a young tree, was allowed to bite a fowl that passed near him, which he did savagely on the wing. The fowl, seemingly nothing the worse, fluttered away at first, and began pecking about as usual. Then something caused it suddenly to stand still and stare; then it began to stagger and flutter round in a circle, and within five minutes from the time it was bitten, it lay down on its side—dead. The result with another, immediately after, was exactly similar. Then a frog, which I had heard was proof against snake-poison, was bitten very slightly on the leg. It, too, leaped about at first as if none the worse; then it came to a halt, elevated itself on its legs into a hoop, and swelled till it looked ready to burst, and there it remained without ever moving again—dead.

Inoculating a fowl on the thigh with the minutest quantity of the poison from a glass tube resulted similarly to the above, except that the effect took ten minutes instead of five, owing, no doubt, to the smaller quantity of the injection. Larger injections proved as rapid in their result as the bite. For this reason of the poison from a live or dead snake being equally dangerous, natives are most particular in burving dead cobras or kraits. in case of

anyone accidentally treading upon the fangs. The action of the gland being mechanical, pressure upon the fangs presses on the gland and forces out the poison whether the animal be dead or alive.

Happily there is one counteractive provided by Nature against reptiles so deadly, in the shape of the mongoose, a beautiful little creature about half a foot high and eighteen inches to two feet long, all long silvery-brown fur tapering into a bushy tail which seems its larger half. It possesses great activity and strength, and a pair of piercing eagle eyes. The mongoose being the inveterate foe of the snake, is equally the benefactor of man, and for the sake of its habits, as an enemy not only to snakes, but to reptiles and vermin generally, it is encouraged and protected by the natives, and is often domesticated by Europeans as a means of prevention as well as cure. Reptiles scenting its vicinity are much shyer in intruding than they otherwise would be; and when so domesticated, it runs about the bungalow tame and playful as a kitten. Snakes, frogs, rats, mice, are all fair game to it, as well as the loathsome musk-rat, whose irritating patter across your rooms at night is so hostile to sleep, and at whose bouquet even dogs sicken. In the tenth part of the time that a dog would take, even when worked up to the attacking point, it will exterminate a whole colony of musk-rats, and banquet upon the only part of them it finds worth feeding upon—their blood. Once, to test the accepted belief about the mongoose and snake, I managed to secure a vigorous cobra in a large earthen water-jar, and summoned the mongoose. Presently he came, peering about suspiciously as he drew near, as if divining the presence of an enemy without exactly knowing where, till his attention was drawn to the open mouth of the jar. In an instant, with a glance like fire, he had descried his foe, as his raised fur coat and glittering eye showed, at the same time that he darted backwards. Then, rising on his hind-legs, he advanced his head again over the mouth of the jar, only to dart back again as the cobra struck at him, though too late for the lightning retreat of the mongoose. Again the latter repeated his scrutiny, and again the cobra darted at him ineffectually, sinking back each time into the jar. This was repeated again and again, the mongoose each time enticing the cobra farther and farther out of the jar as its rage increased.

till once, when its head and neck appeared clear beyond the mouth, in an instant, too quick for the eye to follow, the mongoose had it just below the head, securely and safely, and was coolly dragging it out of the jar. Trailing it along the ground to a convenient spot, he soon gave it its coup-de-grâce, and we watched the marvellous instinct with which he disabled the reptile and at the same time avoided the least chance of a bite. Several times since then I have seen the attack repeated under different circumstances, but always successfully and with the same dexterity and cunning.

Immense as is the number of snakes annually killed in India, for which the Government reward of two anas a head is paid, yet these are but an imperceptible drop in the bucket so far as really reducing their number goes. Only when the conditions of native life are somewhat changed, and mud and thatch give place to brick and plaster, will there be any sensible diminution of them. Once, while present at the breaking down of an old wall, I counted nearly a hundred cobras, old and young, which had made their home there—a gold-mine to the fortunate coolies on the work, in the shape of the Government reward for the snakes. So great a number found in one spot shows the absurdity of assuming any actual diminution in numbers from the official figures, in fact the Government reward is perhaps little more effectual in reducing the number of snakes than the crusades against them by the so-called snake-charmers. These individuals patrol the country in company, always with a basket or two of their supposed friends, the cobras and kraits, between which and themselves they declare a secret understanding exists, and going from house to house, they profess to wile out lurking snakes from their lairs by the charms of music—as they term the execrable discordant piping to which they treat their reptile friends. Having arranged with a couple of them to pay so much a head for each snake they extracted, one took his stand, along with his basket of snakes, in an outhouse specified, containing plenty of suspicious holes, and began his piping. I had already discovered, by insisting on their showing me the mouths of the snakes in their baskets, that these were minus their poison-fangs, a circumstance which quite explained the affectionate familiarity between the snakes and their keepers, as the latter hung them about their necks,

had mock fights with them, etc., to the horror of the admiring native onlookers. Soon, in answer to the "music," one snake after another glided out of the holes, and with a soft swaying of the head, gradually advanced towards the charmer, till, coming opposite to him, they reared themselves on their tails, and fixing their eyes upon him, kept up the swaying motion as if keeping time to the music. After this had continued a little while, the charmer stopped his music, and fearlessly seizing the snakes, deposited them one after another in his basket and closed down the lid. This place was now supposed to be cleared, and we left it for another, considered to be equally fruitful. The same thing was repeated here, but with a different conclusion. Considering that I was paying for the snakes extracted at the rate of two anas each, and had a right to regard them as my property, I dispatched a couple of them before the snake-charmer could interpose, and evidently to his great consternation. He immediately began to bewail his loss, saying I had deprived him of his power over the snake tribe, that his trade was gone, and so on. In the midst of this tirade I bent down to examine the mouths of the snakes, a movement which caused the charmers to look rather foolish, and discovered, as I had begun to suspect, that the poison-fangs and gland were gone, which discovery, it is needless to add, resulted in the very hasty and uncere- monious exit of the snake-charmers from the premises. The explanation was clear. They had simply introduced their own snakes into the holes by a sleight of hand with which they were familiar, and had afterwards drawn them out by the music, to which they were trained to respond. Never after this was I able to get a snake-charmer to practise his jugglery. Before ever they could be brought into action they had somehow got wind of something suspicious, and disappeared from the field. As a rule, indeed, they fight shy of Europeans. The thriving trade which these men drive is but an instance of the marvellous simplicity with which a native will swallow the most manifest imposture if it contains but a taint of the supernatural. Were the imposture not really so, what a further harvest might not these charmers reap in the Government reward!

The largest common snake of the plains is the dhamin, which reaches a length of eight feet, with corresponding thickness. Its peculiarity is that its upper half is

exactly that of the water-snake in colour and marking, while its lower is as unmistakably that of the cobra, from between which two it is believed to be a cross, though much larger than either. Its bite, like that of all fresh-water snakes, is non-poisonous.

GERALD.

BY ELEANOR C. PRICE.

CHAPTER I. THREE COUSINS.

LINWOOD ST. JOHN is one of the quietest little towns in the south of England. Its only excitements are a county election, a fair once in the year, and any special event in the Fraser family. The Frasers have been squires there for generations, and the London road runs for a long way under the shadow of their high red garden-wall, just outside the town. Between clustering tree-tops one catches a glimpse of weather-beaten, moss-grown old chimneys, and presently at a turn in the road one looks back and sees the great comfortable house itself, set squarely in the midst of lawns and gardens, with sloping meadows, much shaded by trees, leading down to a slow, quiet river.

Most of Linwood belongs to the Frasers, as well as a good deal of land in the neighbourhood. People supposed that Helen Fraser, who for a long time was the squire's only child, would be a great heiress, but in these calculations they reckoned without her father.

Helen's mother died while she was still very young, and she was about twelve years old when Mr. Fraser married again. Then came a large family of boys and girls; then came long bills, bad times, falling rents, and difficulties threatening on all sides. Mrs. Fraser was extravagant, she was also worldly and ambitious, and she did not at all like to meet these troubles by reducing her expenses. Mr. Fraser was weak and did not insist; so everything went on as usual, except that the little squire grew smaller, and paler, and more careworn every day, and that Helen, now a fat, placid, pretty creature of two-and-twenty, with long eyelashes and beautiful fair hair, calmly accepted the rich man her stepmother found for her, and on a certain day in April was to be married to Mr. John Goodall.

Even her stepmother was surprised, though quite pleased and satisfied. She had never got on very well with Helen, who was not demonstrative, and took no

interest in the younger children. Not that they had quarrelled, for both were good-tempered, but Mrs. Fraser always felt that Helen's marriage would be a happy thing for the whole family. They had met this man in the winter at Torquay; she had taken him up at first for amusement, then seeing his admiration of Helen, had encouraged it, still partly for amusement. But things grew serious very soon. The man was rich; there was nothing against him; he and Helen, who was an odd girl in some ways, got on remarkably well together. At the end of a month all was settled, and Mr. Fraser gave a reluctant consent; he was fond of his eldest child, and thought a good deal of his pedigree.

"But in times like these, what can you do?" he said in apology to his nephew, Captain North, who thought that Helen was throwing herself away.

For many years Linwood had not had such an excitement as this—the wedding of its chief young lady. The inhabitants stood about the wide, quiet street in the light of a yellow sunset, and watched the preparations for a triumphal arch at the churchyard gate, and stared with satisfaction at the squire's visitors as they drove from the station.

Far away from the bustle of arrivals, and from all signs of to-morrow's festivity, in a solitary part of the garden, where a grand old cedar stood at the end of a terrace-walk, and overlooked the peaceful view of meadows, and river, and distant hills, now in a glow of gold and purple that deepened every moment, Helen Fraser was having her last talk, as a girl, with the girl friend who had belonged to her all her life.

Helen's head was resting on Theo's shoulder, and Theo's arm was round her, and she was looking down with a sad gravity in her dark eyes which was hardly suited to the occasion.

"My dear, what are you doing?" she said. "Don't you care for him, then?"

"Sometimes I hate him," said Helen in a whisper.

"I wish I had not been kept away from you all this time. It is too horrid. Actually to think that I have never seen him! But I can't stand this, Nell, you know. It is not too late to stop it, even now. Come along, we must go to my uncle at once."

"Nonsense, Theo. Don't be silly; it is a great deal too late."

"What! when you say you hate the man?" said Theo, frowning.

"You should not take hold of one's words like that. It is only sometimes, when he bothers me, and I have to pretend I like it, or when he is most particularly unlike Hugh and all the rest of one's people. But he is a nice, satisfactory old thing, and tremendously kind, and much better, I can tell you, than all your officers that you think so agreeable. Yes, you always used to be held up to me as such a pattern of sense, but I am wiser than you now, Theo."

She ended laughing, and glancing up into her cousin's face; but Theo was not to be so easily pacified.

"Unlike one's own people!" she repeated in low, indignant tones. "Well, I supposed something of the kind, but your ideas on those subjects are always so strange, that I thought you cared for him in spite of that. You wrote to me as if you cared for him, Helen. Do you know, I think you are very wicked. You are deceiving this man, and yourself, and everybody else."

"Except you, dear," said Helen, with provoking amiability. "But you take things up, and exaggerate, don't you see. He is quite satisfied, so it doesn't matter, and when you come to stay with me in the autumn, you will see it is all right."

"But why did you do it?" said Theo.

"Oh, I don't know. How is one to answer such an absurd question? As if those things could ever be explained."

But she did her best to explain, and Theo listened with thorough sympathy, though with growls of impatience now and then. An old, strong, constant tenderness kept her from being very angry with her cousin, whatever she might do. If these two girls had met now for the first time, it is probable that they would not have made friends. Theo, seeing Helen's weaknesses clearly, would have scorned them and her; and Helen would have shrunk from a person so different from herself in every way. But they had been friends almost from their cradles; both their mothers had died early, and they had been brought up very much together. Theo's father, too, had died young, and her lot in life would have been a lonely and sad one, if she had not been taken possession of by Colonel North, the kindest of uncles, the brother of her mother and of Helen's. His wife, too, was dead, and he was left with one son, a few years older than these girls, who had gone into the army and was now a very rising officer.

While Helen and Theo were children,

they were together a great deal at Linwood House, but soon after Mr. Fraser married again, Colonel North retired from the army, and took Theo to live with him entirely. He did not like Mrs. Fraser, who on her part disapproved of his way of educating Theo, and thus through the following years, though the cousins still loved each other dearly, they were not much together, and grew up in very different atmospheres.

They had now been separated for some months by Colonel North's illness. He had been ill all the winter, and Theo, his constant companion, could hardly bring herself to leave him, even for Helen's wedding. Perhaps her coming from a house of suffering may partly account for a certain sadness which weighed on Theo at this time. It was not all disappointment at Helen's choosing this man, who was evidently unworthy of her; though that was bad enough, and a subject of melancholy puzzle to Helen's oldest friend. No explanation could be really satisfactory. Helen might not care for her stepmother, she might be tired of living at home; Mr. Goodall might be the kindest and most generous man living, his defects such as would only be minded by foolish little prejudice. It was all very fine; these were not reasons, to Theo's mind, for marrying Mr. Goodall. No doubt he was very fond of Nell, and Nell liked people to be fond of her; no doubt she would be well spoilt all her life, never be troubled with money cares, have every fancy carried out, be treated like a lazy little princess; all that would suit her thoroughly. At the end of their talk Theo realised that Helen would not on any account have the marriage broken off now, though she could say that she sometimes hated Mr. Goodall. And Theo also realised with a mental shiver that her old Helen was dead, or perhaps had never existed, and that her own high-flown ideas on these subjects had better be kept to herself in future.

Presently some one came from the house to call Helen, and Theo let her go, and went alone along the terrace watching the western sky. The sadness of coming twilight seemed to make it right to be sad. Theo had taken off her hat, for her head ached with vexation, and she stood there against the yellow sky, tall and straight and graceful, her head lifted, and her dark eyes looking away into the distance. The curves of her mouth and nose were very handsome, and very proud and scornful;

her cousin once said that he had never seen so much scorn in any profile as in Theo's. Her front face was much more amiable, partly from the beauty and softness of her eyes, and the smile in them when she was happy; but sometimes her whole expression was sad and hard, and it was so at this moment, when Helen no longer needed her sympathy, and had gone away and left her to a solitary fit of disgust.

"Well, Theo, my dear!" said a man's voice, soft and grave, and her cousin, Hugh North, came down the terrace steps and joined her. "Are you hating anybody? You don't look so cheerful as you ought on this happy occasion."

"I don't know about the happiness," said Theo sorrowfully. "Hate? Oh yes; I hate the world, and marriage, and men, and women, and money, and all the consequences."

"A good wide sphere," said Hugh, smiling faintly. He was fair, stiffly handsome, and very seldom amused. "I met Helen just now. Has she given you these nasty feelings?"

As Theo did not answer, he went on after a minute:

"Is she offensively happy, or what is the matter with her?"

"Everything—nothing," said Theo impatiently. "She makes me miserable, and I think, Hugh, you might have stopped this at the beginning."

"What! this marriage? It was no affair of mine. I did what I could, you know. I said something to Uncle Dick, but as he was inclined to make the best of it, of course I could say no more. I would not vex myself, Theo, if I were you; she will do very well, I dare say."

"You don't feel about it as I do."

"Perhaps not. It is a pity to be too sentimental on these occasions. They come in the course of nature, and we may as well take them easy. I have heard of much worse marriages than this of Helen's. The man is a stodgy sort of fellow, and thinks a good deal of his money; but he's solvent, he's respectable, and appears to be good-tempered. Helen doesn't dislike him, does she?"

"Could she marry him if she did?" said Theo.

The question was asked as much of herself as of Hugh. She did not feel inclined just then to answer for Helen in any way, and of course she could not tell Hugh what Helen had said.

"No, I don't think she would," said her

cousin; after a moment's consideration. "We may trust Helen, I think, to follow her own inclinations. So don't distress yourself. You may find the man better than you expect."

"He is not a gentleman," said Theo, with so much pain in her voice, that Captain North smiled again.

"My dear, excuse me, that is Helen's affair, and you will be wiser if you accept the inevitable, and don't talk about it. If you pull a long face to-morrow, it will be unkind to Helen, and rude to Mrs. Fraser."

The effect of these grave words was to make Theo smile and soften suddenly. Captain North looked at her with approval, which from another man might have been affectionate admiration.

"Men never understand," she said. "I will just tell you this. I think we all have something low and something high in our natures, and we may follow one or the other. I think Nell—— But I won't say any more."

"Better not. I would rather you kept clear of metaphysica. And as to your hard judgment of Nell, I'll observe, Theo, that a girl may have a low motive for marrying a duke, and a high motive for marrying a tradesman."

"Yes, if the tradesman were poor," said Theo. "Do you think I am so hard on Nell, though? Poor dear! I didn't mean to be. Don't let us talk about it any more; only please do me this favour, Hugh. If you ever see any signs of my following Nell's example, please lock me up in some safe place till I have recovered my senses."

"You promise, then," said Hugh very gravely, looking at her under his sleepy eyelids, "never to marry without my consent."

"Yes; I think you are a good judge of people. I think I may safely promise that," said Theo. "Good-bye."

She went away towards the house, and Captain North looked after her till she was hidden among trees. Theo, who from her childhood had regarded him as a kind elder brother, sometimes prosy, and always particular, would have been perfectly astonished at the thoughts and calculations in his mind as he watched her that evening. He was thinking of a certain wish of his father's, which at first had not been his own, so that he had let time pass on, and he was now thirty-one and Theo twenty-three, without any sign of change in their relations to each other. His father knew that he was not in love with

Theo ; he may perhaps have had a story of his own, which was not confided to his father ; but Colonel North knew, and so did he, that he could offer her an affection, already existing, and strengthening every year, which might do almost as well. Theo, with her high-flown ways, was this quiet Hugh's model of a woman ; she was a little wild, and very obstinate, and had been a tomboy in her younger days ; but he rather enjoyed all that, which his father had certainly encouraged, and quite understood the gentleness underneath. He had many safe and excellent opinions, one of which was that cousins ought not to marry ; but yet the idea of Theo's marrying anyone else was hardly bearable.

Theo was so used to him and his fidgety ways, at which she and her uncle often laughed together, that she would not have been surprised at his anxious consideration of her future, much as his conclusion would have shocked and startled her. Captain North felt very serious that evening. He did not think his father would live long, and then what was to become of Theo ? It was true that she had a grandmother, Lady Redcliff, who might not object to having her for a time, but she was a horrid, disagreeable old woman, like all the Redcliffs. Theo's father, George Meynell, should be excepted. He was Lord Redcliff's younger son. He ran through all his money, lived a wild life, and died early in consequence of his wildness ; but he was so charming that everybody loved him. His death broke his father's heart, and thoroughly soured his mother. She quarrelled with her elder son's wife. He, too, was now dead, and the present Lady Redcliff and her children saw nothing of the grandmother, who had now lost everyone she cared for, and lived a savage, solitary life alone in London. The thought of her, as Theo's only resource, was very distressing to Captain North. Yet he could not make up his mind just yet to ask Theo to marry him. Perhaps, not being a stupid man, he felt some doubt of her answer.

CHAPTER II. IN THE CHANCEL.

A WISE woman wrote once, in a letter to somebody who was going to be married : " Congratulation on such occasions seems to me a tempting of Providence. The triumphal-procession air, which, in our manners and customs, is given to marriage at the outset—that singing of Te Deum before the battle has begun—has, ever

since I could reflect, struck me as somewhat senseless and somewhat impious. If ever one is to pray, if ever one is to feel grave and anxious, if ever one is to shrink from vain show and vain babble, surely it is just on the occasion of two human beings binding themselves to one another, for better and for worse, till death part them ; just on that occasion which it is customary only to celebrate with rejoicings, and congratulations, and trousseaux, and white ribbon ! "

Theo Meynell did not suppose herself to have a deep, or clever, or reflective mind, but these were very much the feelings which went to sleep with her the night before Helen's wedding, and woke with her the next morning. She sighed, and wished to go to sleep again, but her maid would not allow that ; so she got up, and soon found that in broad daylight, with bells ringing, and sun shining, and a lovely bridesmaid's dress hanging in the wardrobe, it was impossible to keep up these feelings of cynical philosophy. Everything and everybody seemed so happy, though Helen Fraser was going to be married to John Goodall, that Theo, in spite of herself, began to feel happy too. She never thought much of her appearance, but it was satisfactory to know that she was looking particularly well that morning. Combe said so, and Theo saw that she was right. Captain North need not have warned her against pulling a long face on this joyful occasion, for she did not feel at all inclined to do so, and when Helen came to her room a little later, she received her with all the cheerful affection that could have been expected.

" That's a dear old Theo," said Helen, who was in her usual placid spirits. " You look quite jolly this morning. Do you know, Combe, last night in the garden she was scolding me like anything. "

" You don't seem much the worse for it, Miss Helen," said Combe, who had come to Theo as her nurse twenty years ago, and had stayed with her ever since. She was an important person in Theo's life ; she told her home-truths, and knew all her tempers. Once she had said that she would die for Theo, and there came a time when she was not far from proving the truth of her words. Mrs. Combe was an aristocrat in her notions, with a supreme contempt for money, and all possessions which had not descended at least from a grandfather. She could not for some time get over the shock of Helen's marrying a man who had made his money

in pottery works. "It's a style of thing we're not accustomed to," said Combe. "Not for millions and billions would my young lady so demean herself."

"Theo dear," said Helen, when Combe was gone away, "you hope I shall be happy, don't you? And you know quite well that my being married will never make the smallest difference to you?"

"How could it?" said Theo. "Yes; I hope you will be very, very happy."

"I believe you will like him a great deal better than you expect."

"So Hugh told me last night."

"Did he? What a good old fellow! I wonder if he would care to come and stay with us some day. You might come at the same time, and then you can amuse each other. I shall want you this summer, Theo, or early in the autumn."

"I can't leave Uncle Henry as long as he is so ill."

"Oh, he must get better. What a pity he can't be here to-day!"

"Yes, a dreadful pity!"

"I believe he and John would get on together; they are both so straightforward. Uncle Henry is simple, like John, and hasn't so many prejudices as some people."

"You don't hate John this morning?"

"No, not this morning. I am rather in a good temper," said Helen with a pretty smile. "By-the-bye, there's one bore I must tell you about. You know I told you that John had a friend, a nice clergyman, who was going to be his best man. Well, in his letter this morning he says that Mr. Langton is ill, and can't come, and he must bring somebody else instead."

"That doesn't much matter, does it?" said Theo indifferently.

"Don't you think so? You are the person most concerned, for he will have to take you in to breakfast, I suppose, and that was why I told John most particularly that he must bring his very nicest friend."

"Thanks; you need not have bothered him," said Theo, smiling.

"Oh yes, I thought it was best at once to give him the right impression of you. But I am afraid he has made rather a mess of it; men are so stupid. This is what he says: 'When I got Langton's letter I was at my wits' end, for I have very few friends, especially in London. But this morning I happened to meet young Fane, a colliery manager in our neighbourhood,' here Helen stole a glance at her cousin, who looked quite unconcerned, "'and I asked him to come down with me to-morrow.

He made some difficulties, but at last consented. He is a nice boy, and I hope you will like him; though of course we should both have preferred Langton.' Fane is a good name," said Helen after a moment's pause, "but I suppose a colliery manager can't be anybody. I shall know all those terms better presently, though. Do you mind, Theo?"

"Not in the very least," said Theo. "I shall never see the man again; what difference can it possibly make to me?"

Helen looked at her rather oddly.

"None, of course," she said after a moment. "But you will be conscious of his existence for this one day, won't you?"

She went away smiling, a little piqued by Theo's grand indifference, and wishing, as she did sometimes, that her pet cousin was more like other girls. But then she would not be old Theo, with all her oddities and originalities, finest when she was most absurd.

"I hope I shall live to see Theo in love," thought Helen. "Her ideas about it are so splendid—but the man will want a little courage, poor fellow!"

Helen was in no agitation about herself, that important day. She made no fuss, or hurry, or delay; she looked very pretty and quite contented, and kissed her step-mother and the children with placid sweetness. Mrs. Fraser had certainly tried to do all honour to Helen's marriage. She had asked half the county, and did not show the smallest outward sign of being ashamed of Mr. Goodall. She smiled agreeably on all Linwood, which had assembled in the street leading to the church, with flags, and flowers, and welcomes, and wishes of joy. The sun shone on the crowd in its Sunday clothes, on the children in blue and white who were to throw flowers in the bride's path. All the rejoicing seemed to be very hearty, for though people rather disliked Mrs. Fraser, and laughed a little at the squire, they all liked Helen, who had a pleasant manner with them, and knew how to admire their babies.

The church was old, and low, and dark, with heavy pillars, and high pews blocking up the nave. The chancel was of a later date, a high raised space with three or four great Perpendicular windows, which having lost their ancient glory of colour, except a few fragments, let in a full flood of sunshine on the wedding-party. This was where Theo first saw her new cousin and his friend, as she, with the other

bridesmaids, followed Mr. Fraser and Helen up the church. John Goodall looked much more nervous than his bride. He was a tall young man, rather fat, and very pale, with a short reddish beard and keen, honest, dark eyes. He had an expression of the deepest and most anxious solemnity, which cleared up a little when Helen was actually standing by his side, and the old rector was beginning the service.

Theo was glad to feel that she rather liked him, though he gave her a trembling inclination to smile. It appeared to her that the man was very fond of Helen, and would think a great deal about making her happy. And though he looked solid, he did not look vulgar. Theo perceived that Hugh was right. Though of course very different from Hugh, John Goodall was not of an absolutely inferior creation.

Theo had a free way of looking about her at the most inappropriate moments, and not with quick, slight glances, but with a grave, deliberate stare, which no person could encounter without feeling it. Mrs. Fraser had often complained of this trick, one of the results, she said, of Colonel North's system of no education, and copied exactly from him. But Theo unfortunately never troubled herself about Mrs. Fraser's opinion while she was a girl, and Mrs. Fraser had now given up as hopeless any idea of training her to better manners, so she stared about her as usual at Helen's wedding, noticing in a vague sort of way the people's dresses, the effects of light and shade, the beauty of Helen's fair, bent head under her veil, the sturdy breadth of John Goodall's shoulders. She was in one of her most absent moods, but it was a tender mood too; she did not look at all scornful; her face was full of gentle thought, not exactly arising from the service, of which she did not hear a word. She was thinking of Nell's childhood and her own, pitying and loving her cousin, perhaps all the more because she had disappointed her. She was thinking also of their talk last night, and pitying Mr. Goodall, and wishing that Nell had not said those things about him. If the man had been much worse than this, surely Nell, having promised to marry him, ought not to have allowed herself to see or mention any defects in him. Poor Nell! Everybody does not see things in the same way, and it now seemed possible that she might be happy after all.

Many people in the church that day looked at Theo as much as at the bride. There was something so noble and unconscious in the way she stood—closer to Helen than any of the others—the flowers drooping carelessly from her hands, her head held very erect, with her own little air of spirit and splendour. One of the lookers-on said afterwards that she “took away his breath.” Another, that she was “a magnificent young woman.” Theo thought of nobody's opinion. She stood a little sideways in the chancel, in a broad sunbeam, and looked about her with the absent, deliberate coolness which so deeply irritated Mrs. Fraser. But the Fates were lying in wait for Theo, and her happy unconsciousness did not last long. She had been gazing intently at one person in the little group near her, and had just roused herself to wonder who he could be. She certainly had never seen him before, at Linwood or in the county. He was a very tall young man, taller than the bridegroom, with a dark, pale skin, brown hair cut close, and a thin line of moustache which did not hide a rather firmly-set mouth. The upper part of his face was very good, with large, handsome, hazel eyes. He was thin, and looked a little worn, a little ill-tempered, and very like a gentleman. As Theo looked, his rather tired eyes were lifted suddenly and fixed upon her. It was a moment before she, at least, knew how straight and how intently they were staring at each other. Then she slowly dropped her eyes, her whole face and air became scornful, and during the rest of the service she looked about her no more.

In the vestry afterwards, she found herself being introduced to Mr. Goodall, who grasped her hand with quite unnecessary warmth. She was also made acquainted with his best man, who bowed and looked shy. They had both written their names as witnesses of the marriage. There they stood for the world to see, on the same sheet of the register—Theodosia Maynell, and Gerald Fane.

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CHAPTER XXVIII. "OLD LETTERS."

THE Rev. John was profoundly perturbed by hearing from Mrs. John of Tom's lapse—or plunge rather—into vice. After much agitated thought he came to the only conclusion possible—that Tom's confession was an hallucination of fever—else, why had he not made it that morning to him, his clergyman? There could be but one reason—that in the morning he had been lucid, coherent, and in his right mind.

However, he would put this thing beyond doubt. He would see Tom again, urge him to repeat his confession, and—if he repeated it—discover for himself from his manner whether it was, or was not, an hallucination of fever.

Nevertheless, the Rev. John was in no hurry to put this thing beyond a doubt. At the back of his mind, like a spectral presence, unseen but felt, was a shuddering misgiving that a theory, dear as life to him, might be shaken in an hour. Therefore the Rev. John persuaded himself that he had pressing and all-important letters to write before he could set out to pay this momentous visit. He took his time in writing; he took his time in getting to Leeds; and, in Leeds, in walking to Skinner's Alley.

Shall we say he was relieved to find Tom dead? His death was but the question of an hour sooner or later. At the bottom of his heart was the Rev. John relieved to find it had happened an hour sooner? Perhaps he was unconsciously. But, if he was, he did not, so to speak, pop his head under the clothes more childishly

than any of the rest of us, who will never see what we should shudder to see.

The Rev. John found Archie sitting stupefied beside the bed of death. He really could not say how long it was since poor Tom had died. It seemed an incalculable time to him, yet Tom had been but half an hour dead.

'Twas but just now he went away;
I have not since had time to shed a tear;
And yet the distance does the same appear
As if he had been a thousand years from me.
Time takes no measure in Eternity.

"He's gone!"

"Yea."

"Has he been dead long?" For the Rev. John was not easy about those delays.

"Long! Some time—a long time, I think; I don't know how long."

The Rev. John was relieved. If he had made what haste he could, he would still probably have been too late.

"Was his mind at ease, Archie?" he faltered.

"Oh yes; perfectly, since mother's been with him."

The Rev. John was silent for a little, trying to muster courage for the next question which rose to his lips; but, his heart failing him, he turned the conversation.

"Where's the woman?"

"Mrs. Stubbs? She goes out charring, and when I came she went away. She promised to send a nurse. I wish he could be moved home to-day, uncle."

"There's your mother to think of, Archie. It's been a bad case of fever, you know. But he might lie in the church till the funeral."

While this point was being debated the nurse made at last her appearance, and to her the Rev. John gave instructions for the undertaker. Then Archie took the letters which Tom desired should be placed

in his coffin; and, after a long look at the white, worn face, left the cellar with his uncle, and returned home, silent for the most part.

On reaching home he sought his mother, to tell her with tears of Tom's last words and moments.

Mrs. John wept quietly, and said at last:

"Are those the letters? May I read them?"

"Of course, mother. There's nothing in them. They spoke of home to the poor fellow; that was all."

Mrs. John took the letters upstairs to her room, but in half an hour hurried back in great agitation to seek the Rev. John in his study.

"John, who was Tom Chown?"

"Who was he?" bewildered.

"Who was his mother?"

"I think I told you at the time, my dear, when I baptised him, didn't I? She was that poor woman who came to Colston to seek her husband, who had deserted her."

"She didn't find him?"

"She was confined the night she reached the town, and died in her confinement. She asked me to find him, if I could, and if not to take care of the child for her. But I couldn't find him. I put the case into the hands of the police, and I went round myself to the clergy, but no one of that name was known in the neighbourhood. But why do you ask, dear?"

"Because of these," handing him a couple of yellow letters.

"Those? I gave them to him myself after his confirmation. His mother asked me to keep them for him."

"You never told me about them."

"Didn't I, my dear? I must have told you about them."

Mrs. John shook her head.

"No, I never read them before, and I don't think you can have either."

"I might have read them without thinking," he said meekly, and, indeed, this was highly probable. Now, however, he read and re-read them carefully, concentrating upon them his utmost attention, without discerning the slightest reason for the importance Mrs. John attached to them. At last he looked up, perplexed and apologetic. "Well, dear?"

"Well! Don't you see?"

The Rev. John looked back blankly at the letters, and again blankly up into Mrs. John's face. She had, therefore, to explain herself, which she did as clearly as her

extreme agitation would permit, with the effect of converting, convincing, confounding the Rev. John.

"You think there's no doubt about it, Mary?"

"What doubt can there be? John, we must keep the letters. It would not be right to bury them with him."

"To bury them?"

"He wished them and some letters of Archie's to him to be buried with him."

"Don't you think, Mary, it would all be best buried with him now?"

Mary was silent. She paced up and down the room swiftly, her brow knit, her head bent, her hands wrung together spasmodically behind her back.

"There's no need now to decide, at any rate," urged the Rev. John, so roused out of himself by this startling discovery as to counsel his counsellor.

"No; but we must keep the letters, John. We must keep them," she groaned. "We have no choice."

"It was his own wish that they should be buried with him, dear."

"And if they concerned only him we should have the right to do it. But we have not the right to do it when the interests of others are concerned. Have we, John dear?" looking up wistfully and woefully into his face.

"You're always right, Mary; always, dear."

Next morning when the body was brought and laid in the church, Mrs. John placed in the coffin only Archie's letters.

Two days later poor Tom was laid in the spot he had chosen for his grave—in sight of the vicarage, and beside the path used daily by Mrs. John on her way to the school. He attained the little and loving immortality he wished for in this world, since Archie often thought of him, and Mrs. John, while she lived, made his grave each year beautiful with flowers. And he attained also another earthly immortality, for which he would not have greatly cared. The Rev. John's theory, of his confession of a headlong plunge into vice having been an hallucination of fever, had time in two months to root itself and grow up into a sturdy and dogged conviction, which Mrs. John, of course, was at no pains to disturb. Somehow he never spoke much about the matter to her; and for the first and last time in his life acted without advising with her or even confiding in her. She, therefore, was no less surprised than the rest of the parish to see a simple headstone

on Tom's grave with this inscription: "Thomas Chown, the first of the Neopedoholo Baptists. Baptised November 9th, 1855. Died July 4th, 1878."

It is not, however, to this distinction that Tom owes the space we have given him in this history, but to the bearing of his fortunes upon those of Archie, to which it is time that we return.

CHAPTER XXIX. AN ASSIGNATION.

ON the morning of poor Tom's funeral, Archie got from Mrs. Bompas's solicitor the notice he had been expecting of proceedings to be taken against him for breach of promise of marriage.

For aught that I could ever read, could ever hear by tale or history, the course of true love never yet was crossed (in fiction) by anything so unheroic, undignified, ludicrous, as the prosecution of the hero for breach of promise. Fancy a string of such letters as that we have already given being read out in court, printed in every newspaper, laid on every breakfast-table, and laughed at by every man and woman in England, from Ida down to Dick!

You may make a hero brutal, selfish, sensual, vicious, criminal, and find for him admirers; but a ridiculous hero is a contradiction in terms. Yet here is our hero about to be pilloried in the most ridiculous position in which it is possible for a man to stand.

Being in a state of extreme mental and physical prostration, Archie was desperate in his resolutions. He would disappear altogether, quit England, lose himself in the wilds of America. Even Mrs. John, to whom Archie's exile would have been as a most bitter bereavement, could see no other way out of the scrape than his disappearance, at least for a time. There was no money to buy off these harpies with, and only money or marriage would prevent this crushing scandal.

"I think, Archie, I should like to consult Dr. Grice about it, if you don't mind my telling him the whole story."

"Of course, mother, if you like; but I cannot see what else anyone could suggest."

But Mrs. John, who put merited and immense faith in Dr. Grice's practical wisdom, and who, besides, wished to consult him upon the letters which had so startled her and the Rev. John, was not to be dissuaded from consulting the oracle.

Therefore, she started early the next

morning for the train, in order to catch the doctor before he set out on his professional rounds. To do this she had to leave Edgburn at nine o'clock—that is, half an hour before the post brought a letter which might have altered her plans. It was a letter to Archie, which ran thus:

"Bridgewater Cottage,
Heatherley, Ryeccote.

"DEAR MR. GUARD,—I cannot tell you how distressed I was to hear to-day from my mother that she had been to you with those letters. Some time since she took them from me, under the pretext that I was injuring my health in reading them. Little did I dream of the disgraceful use to which she meant to put them. I have, however, got them back, and think that now the only reparation I can make to you is to return them, though I part, in parting with them, with what has been the sole happiness of a very unhappy life. It is not the least of my unhappiness to think that I have never been able to explain to you conduct which gave you just offence during the last few weeks of our stay in Cambridge, nor even our departure without leave-taking from the neighbourhood. I cannot explain all this in a letter, and I cannot hope, after my mother's behaviour, for the favour of one last interview. Yet, when I recall all your generosity, I almost think you would do me this great kindness, if only you knew how wretched the thought of being misunderstood by you makes me.

"I shall keep your dear, dear letters one single day longer, in the hope that I may have the sad pleasure of giving them myself into your hands. I ask only to see you once more, and only that you may hear my explanations. Will you come? Pray do not answer this, as my mother, seeing your writing, would suspect, and might frustrate, my design of restoring your letters. I shall meet the train which reaches Heatherley from Leeds at two-fifty to-morrow afternoon—such is my confidence in your generosity. For I think you will come. I know you would come if I could give you an idea of what I have to tell you, how I long to tell it, and how utterly wretched I shall be if you deny me this one last chance of an explanation.

"I have long lost the hope that you have kept my letters, but if by any chance you have, you will, I know, exchange them for yours. Pray do not send them by post, as then they must fall into my mother's hands. If you will not come

to-morrow, burn them. But you will come. I cannot, dare not think otherwise. I might in time grow reconciled to the loss of your love, but never to the loss of your esteem. I must explain the conduct by which, I fear, I have forfeited it. Forgive this long letter, this last letter, from—
Yours, ANASTASIA BOMPAS."

It will be seen that this clever letter left Archie no alternative but an acceptance of the suggested assignation. He must on no account write, since his letter would be recognised by Mrs. Bompas; if, therefore, he was to get back his letters at all, he must meet the maiden.

Seeking the Rev. John, he explained hurriedly to him the reason of the sudden journey, so hurriedly that his reverence—though he brought all the forces of his mind that he could summon at so short a notice to bear upon the explanation—received the distinct impression, which he confidently conveyed to Mrs. John, that another letter from these Bompas people had driven Archie to instant headlong flight—whither and for how long he could not say.

Archie had only time to catch his train by a rush. He had hardly got into the carriage when it started, and then he would have given the world to have been back at home. He had felt ill when he had got up that morning, but the excitement of the letter and the minor excitement of a rush for the train had driven back the feeling until he found himself in the carriage and the train had started; then the reaction set in. He lay back in the carriage, helpless with that kind of pain and prostration which comes from excessive seasickness. The journey and its object receded in his mind until it became dim as a cloud, as a dream, and he was vividly conscious only of pain, which at each throb of his pulse seemed to break over him in successive waves, and beat upon him, and beat him down, till he lay helpless as a wreck at their mercy.

In fact, he had caught the fever to which poor Tom had succumbed.

At Ryecote, where all had to change, he was roused by a porter and got upon the platform and into the refreshment-room, where a glass of wine brought him more to himself, so much so that he felt now equal to going through with the business. And, indeed, apart from the effect of the wine he had a kind of lucid interval, and was altogether better and brighter. He was able, when the train started for

Heatherley, to collect and concentrate his thoughts upon the unpleasant interview before him. At best he felt that he must cut a sorry figure in it, having nothing to give the girl in return for her love and her generosity. He had not even kept her letters, and had nothing to return to her but a locket with her likeness in it, which he had brought with him in case she should think it necessary to give him back his presents.

But why should he believe in her love and generosity? Because he could not believe that she hoped to re-inveigle him into her toils in a single interview. His heart being garrisoned in such force by Ida, the idea of an attempt to take it by a coup de main was inconceivable to him.

Nor was it the precise idea conceived by Anastasia. She had certainly hope of re-awakening his old love, for she had no suspicion of having been replaced by another in his heart; but she did not expect to regain her power over him in a single interview. She merely meant this interview to be the first of a series by which he might gradually be re-subdued. But on his re-subjugation she was bent. Through living in the neighbourhood of Ryecote she had come to hear of Mr. Tuck and of Archie's relationship to him, and had formed her own conclusions therefrom upon his prospects. The young lady was only less mercenary than her mother; but being young, and as much in love with Archie as she could be with anyone, she preferred rather to lure than to drive him to submission. At the same time she had not the least intention—if she found her arts fail—of restoring Archie his letters. She resolved—if she gained nothing—to lose nothing by the interview.

When the train drew up at Heatherley, and Archie got out upon the platform, Anastasia advanced with a timid step and deprecating face to meet him.

"You are ill?" she exclaimed.

"I've not been very well," taking her offered hand.

"Yet you have come!" expressing through her voice and eyes the greatness of her gratitude. It was a bit overdone, and oppressive to Archie, who was irresponsible. "How I wish I could ask you home, but——" An aposiopesis dedicated to her mother. "You are not too fatigued for a walk? We might go down by the river; it is not far, and we shall be to ourselves."

Archie assenting, she led the way out of

the little station and out of the high-road into a bye-path, which soon brought them to the river's bank. As the path was a mere track, they had to walk in single file and in silence till they reached the river, narrowed here to a mill-race.

"You had better sit, you look so tired," she said then gently and sympathetically, seating herself on the trunk of a fallen tree.

Archie, glad of a rest, sat beside her. There was a short silence, which he broke at last.

"Your letter was very generous," he said.

"It is you who are generous to come. But I knew you would. You were always generous, except—except—— Oh, Archie, why did you show my letters?"

Here was a sudden and surprising assault. She was drawing a bow at a mere venture to account for her cooling to Archie upon the appearance of Mr. Hyslop. She thought it probable enough that Archie had shown her letters as unscrupulously as she had shown his; but she spoke upon mere suspicion. The bolt shot home, however, for Archie, upon Mr. Jacox disillusioning him about Anastasia, had compared his own letters from her with his friend's, and allowed him also to compare these nearly identical effusions together. As Archie, therefore, looked confused and guilty, Anastasia confidently followed up her attack.

"I couldn't believe it; I didn't believe it till the very words of one of my letters were repeated to me by—by—— But I promised not to give his name. Then only would I believe what mother always told me from the first—that you were but trifling with my affections. For mother wished me to marry Mr. Hyslop because he was rich, and because we were poor, and—and in debt. I brought these letters," she said, taking a packet from her pocket; "they will explain all better than I can. These are letters from my mother, urging me to marry Mr. Hyslop, and these are letters Mr. Jacox wrote to me before I knew you, which mother threatened to show you if I did not myself break off our engagement. I got them out of her hands at last, but could not bring myself to burn them till you had seen them, that there might be no more any misunderstanding between us. You will read them?" pleadingly.

Archie, however, rather to her relief, said there was no need; and Anastasia, being thus free to put what contents she

pleased into the letters, toned down those of Mr. Jacox, and exaggerated the pressure put upon her by her mother to discard Archie and accept the more eligible Mr. Hyslop.

Still, they were bonâ-fide letters. When Mrs. Bompas went, as she often did, to London, under the pretence of business, she wrote in her sober moments long letters of such advice to her daughter, some of which Anastasia happened to have kept. She had also kept all Mr. Jacox's letters, though she had made a choice selection from his extensive correspondence for Archie's eye; in fact, only the earliest and therefore most modest of his effusions, which were taken up, for the most part, with remonstrances upon her prudery.

Having explained her sudden coolness to Archie by her versions of these letters, and by her discovery that he was making mere and cruel sport of her ingenuous affections, she proceeded to unravel the mystery of their sudden disappearance from Cambridge. It was simple and prosaic. They left Cambridge, she said, because, owing to her poor mother's extravagance, they were deep in hopeless debt, from which there was no escape but through her marriage with Mr. Hyslop.

"But could I marry one I did not love, and while I loved another?" falteringly.

This was her explanation of their flight from Cambridge, which it is only fair to give—our own is somewhat different. One wet night Mr. Hyslop, visiting Anastasia, hung up his dripping overcoat in the passage. Here Mrs. Bompas, coming to eavesdrop, found it, and in it—for she whiled the tedious time away by ransacking its pockets—a purse bulging with bank-notes. One of these for a large amount she abstracted without a qualm of conscience, though not without a qualm of fear. Drink had reduced her to bankruptcy at once of money, of principle, and of shame. Next morning she went to London, and tendered the note in payment of a small account. The shopkeeper, however, declined to change it unless she would endorse it. She endorsed it, received the change, returned to Cambridge to find Mr. Hyslop with Anastasia, telling her of the robbery, and congratulating himself upon having known the number of the note, and having telegraphed that morning to have it stopped. Hence their sudden flight, which could be made in a moment without loss, or rather with advantage, since they left nothing but debt behind. Nor were

they in the least danger of pursuit and prosecution. When the note was stopped and the signature of Mrs. Bompas was found endorsed upon it, Mr. Hyslop hushed up the business—not certainly for Anastasia's sake, but for his own; since his relations with these ladies must have come out in evidence, to the delight of his friends and the disgust of his parents.

Thus it came about, that only the three immediately concerned had any idea of the reason why the bright particular star of Cambridge should have shot thus madly from its sphere into the jaws of darkness.

Anastasia, having made her explanations eloquently and with the eloquence also of plaintive and appealing eyes, and hands clasped together convulsively, waited her sentence.

"Archie, can you forgive me?"

Archie felt so ill that it was only by a great effort he could follow her explanations. It may be supposed, therefore, that he was in the worst mood in the world for the part Anastasia expected him to play.

"There is nothing to forgive; or it is I who need forgiveness," he said wearily. "I did show your letters to Mr. Jacox, but only when he had shown me similar ones which you had written to him."

Here she withdrew, as though stung, the hand she had laid imploringly on his arm. If Mr. Jacox had shown her letters, there was small hope of reconciliation with Archie.

"Dastard!" she hissed with sudden fury in her eyes and her voice; but then remembering and recovering herself, she added in a milder tone: "It was dastardly to show letters I had written before I knew my own heart; before I knew you. If you had read his letters to me—if you will read them," holding again the packet out to Archie, confident now of his declining to look at them.

"I do not need to read them to know that they were foolish—foolish as my own."

"Yours! Archie, you do not know what they have been to me—what a struggle it has been to me to give them up."

"It is most generous of you," murmured Archie in a conventional voice, which convinced her that her assault had failed utterly.

She was silent for a moment with half-averted face. Then she said in a chilling voice, as she handed Archie another packet to his great relief:

"I have brought you your presents—such of them as I could take without the

chance of their being missed by my mother," in other words those of least value. "She seems to have suspected my intention to restore your letters to you, for she broke open my desk last night, and has again got possession of them. When I can regain them, I shall return them. And mine?"

"They are destroyed; but there is this," handing her the locket with her likeness in it—her one present to him.

She took it, and flung it petulantly towards the river. The chain caught, however, on the low bough of an alder which hung over the water.

Archie, who now suspected the true motive and meaning of the interview into which he had been tricked, rose disgusted, and said in a voice of constrained civility:

"Good-bye."

"Good-bye," she answered, without moving or turning back towards him her averted head.

Archie walked slowly and feebly back towards the station. She waited until he was well out of sight, and then rose to recover the locket, which she was very glad to find retrievable. By stooping far forward she could just touch it, but as she tried to grasp it she over-reached herself, and fell headlong into the mill-race. She was swept away by the swift current, and would certainly have been drowned or crushed by the mill-wheel if a policeman had not plunged in gallantly from the opposite bank, and with great difficulty brought her out.

POISONOUS REPTILES AND INSECTS OF INDIA.

IN TWO PARTS. PART II.

TWO reptiles much lower and less dangerous in the poison scale than the snake are familiar to Anglo-Indians in the scorpion and centipede. It is no unusual experience of the European, especially if resident in the country, where thatch, for coolness, underlies the tile roofing of his bungalow, to see one or other of these reptiles drop down from the eaves of his verandah, or a centipede uncoil itself from one of the crevices which the irrepressible white ant has excavated along the jambs of his doors.

The first sight I got of a live scorpion was when, walking outside to breathe the cool early air after six o'clock breakfast, I saw a creature not unlike a crab right in the path before me. Indeed, I really

took it to be some land species of crab, though wondering at its sharp, threatening tail and spider-like head. While examining it carelessly I marvelled afterwards how I had escaped being stung, when informed that the creature I had been overhauling was a scorpion. Though acquainted with its appearance in glass cases, the resemblance had never occurred to me on meeting the live reality; and its position in the midst of bare fields, without grass or shelter of any kind, had also been misleading.

Frequently though the scorpion is met with, yet a sting from one is rare. An instance coming within my observation was that of my chowkeedar, who had been stung during the night while asleep on his mat in a corner of the verandah, where the reptile had evidently dropped down from above. I was awoke by a loud "bap-re-bap" and the very familiar "sâp kâtdyia" ("Father, oh, father, a snake has bitten me!"), and, on going to the spot with a light, we discovered the assailant to be, not a snake, but a scorpion, which was standing motionless in the corner, still angrily curving its tail—a discovery which afforded unspeakable relief to the chowkeedar, who had thought his last hours were come, and who now with folded hands and upturned eyes devoutly acknowledged his escape in the exclamation: "Dohai Ram Ji, jân buchgaia" ("Mercy, oh, Ram, my life is spared!"). He had pressed upon the reptile, no doubt, while turning round, and had been stung on the arm, which rapidly swelled to a great size, accompanied by pain so excessive as to cause a feeling of faintness. With his mind, however, relieved from the "worst," he soon set about collecting herbs from the compound and garden, under the application of hot mashes of which the pain gradually subsided, and, along with the swelling, disappeared in a couple of days.

Being curious to watch the habits of the scorpion, I placed one under a glass case along with a grasshopper two inches long, whose sharp-spiked legs constituted its strong natural defence. For a while the scorpion took no notice of the wild leaps of his companion, though every now and again it struck against him in rebounding from the glass cover, but at length, irritated by the continuance of these, it assumed the offensive. After several unsuccessful clutches, he managed to seize with his toes a leg of the grasshopper, which he held in his jaws, while endeavouring to transfix him with his sting, till he succeeded in driving it

through and through him. The leaps of the grasshopper now speedily grew feebler, and soon he lay motionless and dead. For twenty-four hours the scorpion took no further notice of his companion, and then, pressed by hunger, he bethought himself of him, and speedily devoured him.

Like the scorpion the centipede also seems partial to grasshoppers, when it can get them. An enormously magnified copy as it is of the little home centipede, the sight of one five or six inches long, with its multitude of prehensile feet all moving at once, and its long feelers steering its way, causes an involuntary creeping of the flesh. Once while reclining on a sofa perusing a daily paper after mid-day breakfast, preparatory to "turning in" for the customary siesta, I was surprised by a thump-thumping against a newspaper which was lying in a corner of the room, and the continuance of the sound induced me to jump up to ascertain the cause, suspecting, of course, a snake and frog. The raising of the paper disclosed a centipede of about five inches long, holding in his jaws a large grasshopper, which he was quietly hollowing out, without the least regard to the frantic kicks of his victim, which had occasioned the noise against the paper. Nor did he seem disposed to relinquish so choice a morsel, but allowed himself to be turned over and over without even relaxing his hold; and as the grasshopper could not physically recoup his loss, I let his devourer continue, till in a quarter of an hour only the shell remained, and only then did the diminishing kicks of the grasshopper cease altogether.

On another occasion, in the hot month of May, during my morning ablutions, while raising the sponge to my face, I was met by the near view of an ugly pair of horns, followed by a head, emerging from one of the pores. Not an instant too soon, I dropped it down again on the basin stand, upon which the full length of a hideous centipede gradually unwound itself.

Such are instances of the way these reptiles are come upon now and again in India, generally when and where least expected, and showing the wariness people require to practise in every movement, even in lifting a book or paper, or putting the hand anywhere where the eye does not also reach. The bite of the centipede is rarely heard of, but it is more or less poisonous, and, like the sting of the scorpion, is considered serious to children.

Very opposite to cobra and krait, centi-

pede and scorpion, and one of the most harmless of reptiles, is the frog, which, in India, is represented by two widely different varieties. One of these is so numerous in some years as easily to suggest one of the plagues of Egypt, and this must form the apology for introducing a non-poisonous reptile in this paper. Of the two, the common little frog, called the beng, of a dirty yellow, appears more or less all the year round, especially during the rains, and from its intrusion into dwellings and every possible place where it can find a footing, is the variety that becomes such a nuisance of the country. Besides its rather repulsive appearance, it possesses, like the skunk, a strong natural protection in a most offensive fluid, which it discharges when molested. So hateful is this to dogs, that when one has once experienced the nauseous dose through teasing a frog, he takes great care never to risk it again. The discharge causes him to turn away with intense disgust, shaking his head, while large flakes of foam drop from his mouth, and he appears most uncomfortable indeed for some time to come. A shower of rain in the hot weather is the signal for this frog to emerge in fresh swarms from its hidings, and spread about in all directions; and then chowkeedar, sweeper, and bearer find at length something to do in ejecting them from the bungalow, and preventing their defilement of your rooms. But it is during the night, when it is so necessary to keep open the glass and venetian doors to cool the rooms from the day's heat, that their raids are most troublesome, and their incessant hopping, and occasional loud croak just as you are closing your eyes, is very irritating and destructive of sleep. Occasionally this is varied by the ominous squeak which tells of a snake, probably attracted indoors in pursuit, having seized one. On one such occasion I was awake by the well-known squeak, and getting up out of bed, and carefully "scanning the country" by the night-light, was guided by the sound from room to room, till I found it proceeded from a hole in the doorway, the mouth of which was filled by a frog. On looking closer down I found the frog was held there by a snake from within, whose dark head and glittering eyes just appearing now and then, showed to be a krait. The question was how to unearth such a dangerous neighbour instead of driving him farther in, and finding that he held tenaciously to the frog, the only feasible plan appeared to be to draw the

latter gently up with a pair of long nippers till the head of the snake could be seized with another pair, which was the work of a moment, and enabled its being easily disposed of by a simple pressure of the pincers.

Another enemy of the frog is the muskrat—though not a dangerous, yet a very offensive intruder in a bungalow, from the putrid smells which sometimes permeate a room from the hidden remnants of his feasts. I had been disturbed night after night by periodical raids of one from the outside, always about the same time, just as I was dropping off to sleep. First was the disagreeable patter and "click" of the rat, then the quickly smothered squeak of a captured frog, and the sound of crunching bones, followed by a more irritating noise of scrambling or climbing, which I could not comprehend. In the course of some days I became conscious of a faint putrid odour gradually increasing in strength, till the room soon became unbearable, and after a long search, we noticed that the smell was stronger near a wardrobe that stood an inch or two from the wall. Jumping up to glance over this seemingly inaccessible place, to my astonishment I found on the top the putrefying remains of about a dozen frogs amid a perfect gollatha of bones. This had been the muskrat's dining-table, and the scrambling noise I had heard had been his gymnastic feat of drawing up the frogs between wall and wardrobe, though why he had been at such trouble is hard to say.

Climbing is the frog's special vanity, and it is no unusual thing to hear a loud triumphant croak overhead from a frog perched on the ledge of a door, as if in full enjoyment of his precarious post. Sometimes he gets crushed in his ascent between door and jamb, and there remains till the same putrid odour leads to his discovery. A favourite food of the frog is the fly. Wherever a patch of refuse outside collects black masses of these, there the frogs soon circle round, and keep up a short, lazy hopping, insufficient to scare the flies, though the constant smacking of the frogs' jaws proves that a double feast is going on. On emptying out some half-dozen quart bottles of flies, caught in the verandah when they were troublesome, relays of frogs kept coming in to the feast till the whole loathsome mass soon vanished. This bottle process of capturing flies is perhaps worth mentioning, from its cleanliness, cheapness, and efficacy. Water is poured into a bottle to

the depth of an inch or two, and floated over with a little oil. The inside of the mouth is then moistened with some syrup or preserve, and the bottle placed at the disposal of the flies. These keep clustering over the mouth and dropping within, each fly, the moment it touches the oil, sinking through and getting drowned; and as the flies accumulate the water keeps rising till the bottle may become filled with them nearly to the neck. By ranging some half-dozen bottles along the edge of the verandah, day after day, for some time, they were removed nearly full in the evening, and thus gave great relief by attracting the flies from other parts of the bungalow, and I verily believe immensely reduced their numbers in the vicinity.

I remember the frogs were, one year, so numerous that I was compelled to shut the glass doors at night to prevent the bungalow being inundated with them; and each morning the sweeper regularly went round with a large jar to collect the masses that lay piled a foot and a half deep in each corner of the doorways. As this nuisance continued it occurred to me to utilise them in a practical form, and for this purpose I had a narrow-mouthed hole dug in the garden, into which each jar-full of frogs was successfully emptied. Several holes were filled in this manner containing some fifty jars full ere the supply ceased, the holes, as filled, being sprinkled over with quicklime and closed. Some months later, when the time for manuring the vines came, and the gardener required his customary sum to buy fish for this purpose, I directed him to the frog-holes in the garden, which now supplied a manure ready for use, and yielding a crop of grapes in quality and quantity far superior to anything I had had before.

The other variety of frog, called the *dâboose*, is an agile, handsome animal, much larger in size, of great leaping capacity—of eight to ten feet at a time (its powers of escape being its only natural defence)—and does not possess the offensive secretion of the beng. It appears only during the rains. As soon as the first heavy shower towards the end of June begins the rainy season, and cools the parched earth, then every roadside puddle suddenly becomes alive with them, all of a bright yellow, rolling and tossing over each other as if in the highest enjoyment of their new quarters, while their loud croak sounds in the distance like a policeman's rattle. Where they come from—in the midst, it

may be, of bare fields without shelter of any kind—is the mystery; and should these pools dry up again, they disappear as suddenly and mysteriously as they came. Sometimes by putting the ear close to a rent in the low rice-lands a croak far down may be heard, showing that some of them at least find a home here, where they probably keep sinking along with the sinking moisture till the first shower warns them again to the surface; which seems one, though a not very satisfactory solution of the question. But how they can travel so quickly from such distances, and as quickly vanish, and how they come to discover these pools, still remains an enigma. As the rainy season advances, their original bright yellow gradually changes to a darker shade, and they leave the water to hunt over the fields for insects, where they in turn sometimes become the prey of the amphibious water-snake. The clean look of the *dâboose* suggests the wonder why it is not more used for food by the natives, at least during famine time, instead of being used only by the lowest castes in the extremity of hunger, and to the great disgust of their superior castes.

Among insects, or, more properly speaking, "reptiles," it may seem almost absurd to allude to one so well known as the spider, and yet there is no insect more varied in species, and in which the difference of a tropical over a cold climate becomes more manifest. In India the spider is to be seen of sizes varying from a mere speck to that of a walnut, and of colours varying from brown and black to bright semi-translucent green. There is the little hunting-spider, most active of his species, who obtains his prey, not by the lazy web, but by stalking and bounding upon it, flattening down as he draws near till he hardly seems to move, when a leap secures his prey. There are the different kinds of web-spiders, indoor and out, most of them cannibals, preying on each other as often as hunger prompts, or speed or strength decide a victory. There are the green field-spiders, one like the ordinary brown in shape and size, but yet able to attack and devour it, and transparent as a drop of amber. Another green kind is an ugly creature, like a bug in shape, which moves sideways, and like the former is to be guarded against from its blistering property. A third green variety is a tall lanky creature like a grasshopper, exactly, even to the head and spiked legs, but unlike in its spider-like action, absence of

leaping power, and in a peculiar swaying "devotional" movement, which has obtained it the name of the "praying grasshopper." Still more is it unlike in its ferocious habit of attacking and devouring grasshoppers seemingly stronger and better armed than itself. Lastly, and largest of the spider race, is the tarantula, a hideous creature all covered with fine hair, and whose clumsy, bloated look makes one wonder how a reptile so inert can possibly obtain its food.

I had an opportunity of watching one, which had taken up its post inside a fixed blind on one of the glass doors of the verandah, from the outside of which it could be well seen. It was not nearly so large as some tarantulas of other countries, but still a formidable enough looking creature, as big as the bowl of a clay pipe. When I first noticed him he was comparatively lithe and lean, but to my great surprise he daily increased in girth, though never once did he move from the spot he first occupied in a corner of the pane. He was evidently getting food, but how? At length we noticed him at times roll about in his claws a black ball the size of a small bean, which, as he applied it to his mouth, decreased in bulk. Much occupied as my time was, I had little leisure to devote to watching him, and the matter would have remained a mystery but for a friend who was staying with me. Observing narrowly, he noticed that the flies circling about the tarantula decreased at times unaccountably, as he had seen none of them escape outside the blind. He next noticed the wings and debris of flies occasionally appear for a moment in the black ball the spider was rolling about, then disappear in the mass, and soon satisfied himself that this ball consisted of mashed-up flies. Afterwards we observed that each time a fly flew within reach of the spider it disappeared, and simultaneously a fresh fly was added to the paste, and also that on every such occasion there was a lightning movement of a long leg of the tarantula, which, like the others, was armed with a sharp hook. This, doubtless, explained the method of capturing its prey. Here, then, was a reptile we had thought so helpless, yet with such marvellous rapidity and precision of stroke as even to strike down flies in the act of flight, so surely as never to require its moving from the spot. Once a large moth settled in an opposite corner of the pane, and for two days both retained their respective posts, but, on the morning of the third, only the wings of

the moth remained, and the spider had shifted camp to the moth's corner. The amount of flies he got "outside of" in a day must have been enormous, and was evidenced by his swelling, till he looked as if he would burst. His fate, however, remained in obscurity, as one night he disappeared for good. The bite of the tarantula is considered venomous, but of rare occurrence.

The blistering spider is the only really troublesome one of the spider species, from the property which gives it its name, and that chiefly to the indigo-planter. During manufacture in the rainy season, as the planter stands on his vats in white duck, a target for the myriads of creeping things that emerge from the cartloads of plant that are being emptied around him, sometimes a blistering spider gets crushed within his shirt-sleeve, and only a slight itching is experienced at the time. In two or three days, however, without any further warning, a crop of most unsightly blisters begin to appear on the arm, and spread over it, causing him no small anxiety, till they slowly and reluctantly disappear after days of careful treatment. If an "old hand," the moment the premonitory itching is felt, he rushes away and washes thoroughly with soap-and-water, which generally averts any after results. Should any of the virus get into the eye, as sometimes happens, even from a touch of the finger, the case is more serious, and may endanger loss of sight in the severe inflammation and closing up of the eye which follows, and which often occurs to natives without their having any idea of the cause.

A very different insect from the spider, and its greatest enemy, is the ichneumon-fly—a beautiful creature, all splendid in green and gold, from one to one and a half inch long, with thread-like waist, a most formidable sting, and of great strength and rapidity of flight. It is ever on the qui vive, hunting for one or other of the insects that form the food of its larva. One of the most familiar indoor sights is the fly labouring along with a huge spider suspended from its legs towards its mud-cell, which it has previously constructed with great labour in some convenient corner of the room. The favourite occupation of the ichneumon-fly, however, seems to be cricket-hunting, and it is constantly to be seen on exploring expeditions among cricket-burrows. Wherever the freshly turned up earth, covering the mouth as a guard by day, indicates a tenant within,

there the fly vigorously digs away, and makes the fine earth fly from his long wiry legs. At a loss first to understand these untiring labours, I watched one patiently. After half an hour's hard work, at last it seemed to have pierced through the obstacle, and disappeared inside, but I was surprised to see it instantly emerge again, and once more begin digging vigorously as before, but now as if to widen the aperture. Repeatedly it attempted to go in, but as often returned to resume its digging, and on looking closer I found out what had puzzled me explained by the large head and formidable jaws of a cricket filling up the entrance. Whichever way the fly turned, the head turned to meet him, and he was now evidently bent on storming the stronghold by widening the approach. But this was not left for him to do. In a faint-hearted moment, the cricket made a fatal retreat, and in an instant the fly was in after him. For a few seconds neither appeared, then the cricket bolted out with wild leaps away from home as if for bare life, and in two seconds more the fly was out and, making straight for him, fixed upon him for a moment. Then the leaps of the cricket grew shorter and feebler as at each leap the fly momentarily fastened upon him, till at last he could only drag along at a walk, and the fly, once more settling on him, dug in his sting long and deeply, during which process, no doubt, he deposited the germ of another fly. Without any delay he then began dragging the cricket, at least six times his own bulk, along the ground towards his nest. Great as the number of crickets must be which the ichneumon-fly thus disposes of, the cricket has not around it the domestic halo of romance which it bears at home, and small pity is felt for one so destructive to vegetation and so troublesome in the evenings, when its deafening whirr almost drowns the voice. It is wonderful how long the insects deposited by the ichneumon-fly in its cell remain alive. Even if this be broken open days after it has been closed and left by the fly, these will still be found with a remnant of life in them; no doubt for a purpose—to keep the food supplies fresh till the eggs deposited in them have fairly burst and the young larva begins to feed on its surroundings, these comprising a heterogeneous mass of spiders, caterpillars, and crickets. The ichneumon-fly, though too intent upon its own business to trouble any one, is savage enough when interfered

with, and its sting is a thing well to be avoided.

The ant is so well ventilated a subject, even to the destructiveness of the white variety, in cutting through clothes like a pair of scissors, and hollowing out to a shell the hard rafters of bungalows, sometimes to the unconscious danger of life; etc., that I will confine myself to some features perhaps not so well known. In old country bungalows it is no unusual thing of an evening during the rains to find dense clusters of white ants hanging along the frame of a doorway, from among which large-winged drones are pouring out and beating helplessly about in their clumsy flight against windows and furniture, presenting exactly the appearance of a hive of bees swarming. As the doors are opened and they get outside, kites, king-crows, and jays presently crowd the air, and sustain an extirpating flight among them as fast as they begin the joys of winged life and open air. Unlike bees, the ant drones are the only members of the family endowed with wings, and that as if for the purpose only of their owners being got rid of the more easily, for when once the drone has left its nest it never returns; nor does it seem to leave under compulsion, as with bees, but voluntarily and as if from instinct. It is strange to see creatures so immense as the drones, an inch long, emerge from among insects so minute as the workers or neutrals, each drone being equal to six or eight of them. The only other winged ant is the queen, which is more lithe and elegant, and easily recognised from the drones.

Another variety is the black ant, most troublesome in the pantry, and the untiring assailant of sweetmeats and the sugar-bowl. In their desperate efforts to cross the water in which these are insulated, they often sacrifice themselves for the sake of their community, and plunge into the water to enable their friends to form a bridge of their dead bodies and so to reach the tempting goal. Long thin columns of them may be seen reaching from ceiling to floor, across the floor, and up the leg of a table, in one unbroken line till they reach a sugar-bowl or other unprotected sweetmeat on the table; and their peculiarity is the giants which accompany these marching columns, and who seem the soldiers or warriors of the tribe, always patrolling to and fro along the line, and ready to rush to the attack wherever an adversary offers. They do not always confine themselves to

"small metal" or provoked attacks, as I once found out in a most unexpected manner. I had several young pea-fowl of which I was rather proud, and which used to be nightly covered over with a large hamper in the verandah. One morning on raising the hamper I found, to my great vexation, the chickens one black mass of the giant ants, and all dead. They had been bitten to death, succumbing no doubt to the infinite number of bites, all slightly poisonous, inflicted on them by the ants, which had probably kept collecting from different quarters during the whole night, though I could not have believed such multitudes could turn out. A cloth thrown over the hamper, and a little sulphur lit within, soon disposed of the marauders.

TRAVELS IN THE EAST.

PART VII.

WHEN I first projected my travels in the East, I had no idea that I should go as far as China, nor had I any notion that a knowledge of Chinese would be useful in my journey. Well, though I have not been to China, I have visited a house where a Chinaman is living; and though I found him conversational, as far as his imperfect English would permit, I might have gained more information, if I had been able to talk in his own language.

We found Jack Chinaman's abode in a shabby little court, reached by a narrow passage from a shabby little street, within well-nigh a sling's throw of the Shadwell railway-station. Setting forth from Stepney with my guide, soon after noon upon bright St. Patrick's Day, a pennyworth of travelling had brought me down to Shadwell; for, though Great in name, the railway condescends to take small fares, and to suit the little incomes of the poor folk in its neighbourhood.

There was nothing New about the court except its name, and there was nothing new at all, not even in her name, about the woman who there greeted us. Old and haggard in her looks, and, through effect of evil living, plainly looking older than her actual years would warrant, she wore a shabby bonnet that well-matched the shabby court, and a dress which in antiquity appeared to match herself. Her hands were skinny claws, crooked as with habit of holding in their clutch a gin-glass, let us say, or something of the sort. There seemed a palsy in their shaking, as she drew her ragged shawl about her scraggy

throat. Her eyes were bleary and blood-shot, and their lids were raw and red; and these, with sundry pimples and some blotches here and there, were the only show of colour in her pale and pasty face.

This lady, although English, was the wife of the Jack Chinaman whom we had come to visit, and who was really the Jack Chinaman described as not endowed with "the true secret of mixing," by the opium-smoking hag who kept the den described in "Edwin Drood." The court where we were standing might very well have been the original, in fact, of the "miserable court" where Mr. Jasper, on awaking from his narcotic trance, mistook the spike upon the bedpost for his cathedral spire.

Viewed from the outside, there was nothing in the aspect of the house from which the lady was emerging, to indicate connection with the Celestial Empire, or in any way to hint to us that a native of that empire was resident therein. It looked as small, and mean, and shabby as any of its neighbours; having a room on the ground-floor, and one on the floor above. The lady acting as our pilot, we ascended to this latter by the help of a small staircase leading, with no passage, direct from the front door. At a glance I guessed the room to measure ten feet, say, by twelve, and barely more than seven in height. There was a sickly smell about it, even now when nearly empty; but when a score or so of smokers had slept there for some hours, the wonder seemed to be that they were not all choked.

By the door was a small fireplace, and in front a small, bent fender, but no poker and no tongs. Perhaps the fire-irons were removed, like the knife of the Lascar who slept by Mr. Jasper; being looked upon as weapons of possible offence. There was a small window just opposite the fireplace, serving as much for ventilation—through a cracked and dirty pane or two—as it could do for light. The ceiling had been yellow-washed, apparently, not long since, and splashes of the colour were scattered on the walls, which had once been painted blue, as a contrasting tint. The room was further beautified by a clothes-line stretched across it, which seemed handy for a strangling if any dreamer, on awaking from his vision, felt that way inclined.

The floor of the chamber was carpetless but clean, all traces of the night's work having been removed. By way of furniture there were a couple of wooden chairs and a brace of wooden bedsteads, placed

lengthways from the window, with a yard of space between them. Each had a lame leg which was supported by a brickbat; and each had a low headboard, and likewise a low footboard, but no post with any spike. On each bedstead lay a mattress, rather hard and thin, but no bolster or pillow, and in lieu of sheets or counterpane, each was covered with some matting, either Indian or Chinese.

On the bed next to the door reclined the master of this mansion of opium-begotten bliss. He wore an English suit of clothes, at least it might have been a suit, if the rough grey vest had only matched the coat and trousers, which were made of smooth black cloth. They all three looked too large for him, as though picked up second-hand, or presented by some clients who found themselves too poor to pay for a good smoke. He had a cloth cap on his head, but had sacrificed his pigtail, and in lieu of it was growing a sparse and straggling little beard, or rather tuft, on his lean chin. His eyes were small, and sunken, and shaped in Chinese fashion, and his cheeks were sallow, thin, and hollow, as though from constant exercise of puffing at a pipe.

His wife, having introduced us, left to do some shopping; I might have thought some gin-shopping, if on her departure my guide had not informed me that such was not her practice, since she had signed the pledge. So, for half an hour or so, we had Jack Chinaman to talk to, and to listen to moreover, and none to overhear. The dreamings of an opium-taker, as given by De Quincey, are interesting, no doubt; but I fancy that Jack Chinaman could tell a tale or two about the dreamers of such dreams, which would afford some startling reading, if only he could somehow be brought truly to confess.

He spoke in a soft voice, but not very distinctly, and with somewhat of a drawl; and though he used no pigeon-English, it was frequently not easy to make out what he meant. He said his name was Ah See, at least such was the sound of it, as I pencilled it in English, not knowing how correctly to spell it in Chinese. But though Ah See was his name, he was commonly called Johnson, and indeed had grown so famous that the court wherein he lived was known as Johnson's Court.

"I sixty-two," he answered to a question of his age. "I come London forty-five ye-ar. Come as cook abo-ward ship that time. Go home some ve-ar after. Live

he-ar twenty-nine ye-ar. In this ho-ouse. Yes. Mr. Dic-kens come see me one ni-ight. No, I not know him at a-all. Sergeant tell me—that Mr. Cha-arles Dic-kens. Sergeant a poli-ice, ye-es. I pre-etty well off then. Plenty ship in do-ocks. Ha-ave taken some time five pound, some-time ten pound in a we-ek. Sa-ave it, O yes. Put by plenty money then. Wi-ife fi-ind where I ke-ep it. Messed it all awa-ay in dri-ink. Wi-ife pretty ba-ad then. Gave her good sha-awl came from for-eign. Was soon put awa-ay. Ye-es, that's it, paw-awned for drink."

Here an interlude occurred, wherein there was much indistinct complaint, chiefly of the "wi-ife," and her misdeeds and drunkenness, which had been his ruin, until she had reformed. Now that the pledge was taken, she contrived somehow to keep it; and so domestic troubles were on the decrease. But he was sadly depressed by the badness of the times.

"Nothing came in last two ye-ar," complained he mournfully. "Thi-ink I have to go, so-on. Can't stop he-ar much. Things very bad he-ar now. Had plenty lodgings once. All over the co-court. Now only this one ro-om for seboke."

This queer word puzzled me a while; but hearing it repeated, I soon learned by the context that it was simply meant for "smoke." A couple of opium-pipes lay beside him on the bed; bits of bamboo two feet long they were; one end being plugged up with a little piece of ivory, and the other, with no mouthpiece, being smoothed to touch the lips. Near the plugged end was the bowl of coarse and clumsy earthenware, coloured green, and having a small hollow, wherein was placed a little bit of opium, about as big as a large pea. The pipe appeared to need much puffing at to keep the drug alight, and much careful cleaning out of pitchy-looking ashes before it was refilled. And the pea had to be moulded and melted into shape upon the point of a long needle, in the flame of a small lamp, before it reached the proper state for putting in the pipe. When, after all the care and labour of preparing it and keeping it alight, it seemed merely to afford some half-a-score of whiffs.

In the half-hour that we spent with him, Mr. Ah See—alias Johnson—prepared, and filled, and smoked no fewer than four pipes. And in the intervals between them, he rolled and smoked three strongish cut-tobacco cigarettes. On my asking at what age he began the baleful practice, "I

seboke now forty-two ye-ar," he replied, without an instant's hesitation, as though his memory were prompt. "Began at seven-tee-eeen. Was ve-ry ba-ad then. Brought up plenty bloo-ood. Doctor said I must seboke. So I try seboke. Bloo-ood stop and I get well. So I seboke ever si-ince. Hundred pipe a da-ay sometime. Ne-ver make me slee-eeep now. Some ta-ake p'raps four, p'raps fi-ive. Then they slee-eeep sound enough. They get sha-aky too. O yes, plenty sha-ake." My ha-and not sha-aky—see."

No, sure enough. It was lean, and even skinny, but, the while he held it forth, it showed no shiver of a shake. And though his age was over sixty, he had hardly a grey hair, and seemed hale and hearty, and fit enough for work, excepting that his right arm was rendered nearly useless, having, he alleged, been broken in his sleep. He had somehow doubled it beneath him, and cracked the bone close to the elbow, while dreaming, perhaps, that he was wrestling with a demon, engendered by the drug which is so devilish in its work.

Yet, if there were a question which of this worthy couple, Mr. Johnson and his wife, had most suffered by indulgence—the one taking to the drug, and the other to the drink—the lady's pallid face and well-nigh palsied fingers would show that greater harm and deadlier had been done by the drink.

We found a tidy little room downstairs, when we had left the den where so many dreams of cloudland had passed away in smoke. It was clear that Mr. Ah See could attend to creature comforts when not engaged in business. When we walked into his parlour, it looked clean, and even pretty—in comparison, at least, with the dreaming-room above. Somehow my thoughts wandered to the parlour of the spider, and its neat and trim appearance, which, alas! had proved so fatally attractive to the poor, weak-minded, and deluded fly.

The two angels who slept in this cleanly little chamber had placed their bed close to the casement, which was curtained with white muslin, and showed no sign of being cracked. The bed was fairly broad, viewing the smallness of the room, and boasted of a bluish counterpane and a whitish pair of sheets. There were some pictures on the walls, of modern English manufacture, but there was no specimen, either ancient or modern, of any Chinese artist; not even so much as a real china teapot or a

willow-pattern plate. The largest of the pictures was a highly-coloured portrait of Little Red Riding-hood, whereof the subject certainly was not to be mistaken, though I doubted if Jack Chinaman were familiar with the tale. There was a mirror by the mantelpiece, the frame covered up with paper, cut in parti-coloured strips—less, perhaps, for art's sake than to keep it from the flies. There likewise was a clock, which, unlike most Eastern clocks, seemed capable of going, for it actually ticked. There was also a round table, sufficiently expansive for a social festive purpose, and strong enough to bear a joint of Christmas beef. There was nothing on it now, however, but a stuffed canary, which the Chinaman affirmed to have lived with him "more than fifteen ye-ar," together with some crockery, some for use and some for ornament, but all of it of English, and not Oriental make.

Altogether, it seemed likely that, despite of his complaints about the badness of the times, Mr. Ah See—alias Johnson—somehow still contrived to do a goodish bit of business in his opium-smoking den, albeit he declared that a shilling's-worth of his "seboke-ing" mixture was sufficient for the filling of four-and-twenty pipes. He claimed to have turned Christian, as a solace to his soul in his declining years, and possibly as penance for the folly and the vices of his manhood and his youth. "I great rogue once. I very much bad then. I quite alter now;" and he pointed, as he spoke, to a couple of framed texts which he had placed upon the wall, as if to prove the fact of his conversion and his faith.

How far in his heart he may be now less heathen than he was, it might be difficult to gauge, though easier to guess. But the truth is pretty certain that some ugly tales are extant, of sailors lured, and drugged, and robbed, and found at last half-dead, having first of all, as a prelude to this sequel, simply been half-drunk. Mr. Ah See has, of course, no recollection of these stories, which probably have sprung from the invention of an enemy, and might be told to the marines, or by the wags of Tiger Bay. But it is possible that Mr. Ah See may find it worth his while to close his tempting little den, if he lays claim to be a Christian, real and sincere; and if he would fain win sympathy, not to speak of some stray shillings, or even sovereigns, it may be, which for so interesting a convert might by certain weak-kneed people be most piously subscribed.

As a contrast to this gentleman and his luxury of living—at any rate so far as his cigarettes unlimited, and scores of opium-pipes a day—I will try to give an inkling, or it may be a pen-and-inkling, of a visit which I paid in my second day of travel, to the home of a poor widow; whom the converted Chinaman might copy with some profit, in so far as uncomplaining self-denial is concerned.

By the side of a thronged thoroughfare, just opposite a church, which, alas! is seldom crowded, we discovered a small shed built on a little scrap of ground, which really seemed too small to be accounted as a "Place." The shed at a rough guess was a dozen feet in length, and varied in its width from three feet six inches at one end to eight feet at the other. One of its long walls was of brick-work, and the other was of planks, and these in many places were an inch or so apart. The corners of the Place abutting on the thoroughfare, were occupied conspicuously on the one side by a coffee-palace, which had retired from competition; and on the other by a gin-palace, which certainly appeared to do a thriving trade. Seen by the roadside, near to a village or a farm, the shed might have been deemed to be a stable or a cow-house. Here, in this great city and bright centre of civilisation, it was humanly inhabited and dwelt in as a home.

Opening the door, without the prelude of a knock, we were welcomed very warmly by a pleasant little woman, about fifty years of age, business-like in manner, and extremely brisk in speech. She was very poorly clothed—indeed, her dress looked well-nigh threadbare; but in clothing and in person she was scrupulously clean. The house, or shed, or room, was as cleanly as herself, and seemed really almost comfortable—although the ceiling was patched up, and one window would not shut, and the plaster was in places peeling from the walls, and the shrunk door let the draught in, and the floor near to the corners showed many a little hole, and there was a rather large hole in the roof.

"Yes, it do want doing up a bit," observed the woman with a smile, as I noted these defects. "But there, we're happy enough in it," she added with another; "though it might be a bit higher;" this, after a moment, was spoken in apology, for at the point where I was standing, my bare head touched the ceiling. "But there, it's nothing when you're used to it," she pro-

ceeded to remark; and perceiving very possibly that she had found a willing listener, she continued with small ceasing in her fluent flow of speech. "Yes, it's low, there's no denyin'; but it's all the warmer. And one don't want no ladders when one wants to clean the ceiling, which I papered it myself I did, true as you stand there, I did, an' went an' bought the paper, an' made the paste myself. And me an' my son helpin' me, we both of us set to one day, an' somehow or another we mended of the roof, we did. 'Cause it used to leak most terrible, speshly when so be it blowed a bittish 'eavy. I dunno how we done it hardly, but the wet don't henter now not much, leastways excep' it's snowing, an' there's nothin' can't keep snow out when it come to melt, there ain't. An' it henters through the walls, too, though per'aps you'd hardly think it."

Here she paused for breath a moment, and I assured her that my thinking powers were equal to the feat. For, close to where I stood, there was a crack between the boards of fully half an inch in breadth; while by the window was another, through which I was able to thrust my closed umbrella, which is not so slim in figure as the present fashion goes.

Half of the shed contained a big four-poster bedstead, with the unusual addition of a mattress, sheets, and counterpane, and not the common substitute of some straw stuffed in a sack. The floor was further covered by an ancient chest of drawers, of loose and rickety appearance, as though they had been rather dissolute in youth. Clearly they had fallen into evil company, for of their handles some were missing, and I could see no pair that matched. There were small strips of muslin pinned as curtains to the window, which if opened, as was plain from the absence of a sash-line, it was difficult to shut. In the way of useful furniture, I saw three chairs with broken backs; and two tables, which had likewise been severely wounded, and were propped against the wall. It seemed as though they had retired from active service, and were pensioned off for life. For fear it might be moved, and come thereby to sudden grief, one of the tables had apparently been used as a museum or asylum for old ornaments that had fallen to decay. A lot of cracked or broken shells, and several ugly knick-knacks, were carefully arranged on it; together with a tea-caddy which had seen better days, and a starling that had apparently moulted just

ere it was stuffed. A row of brightly polished tins made for common kitchen use, were hanging by the fireplace, and formed a useful contrast to the treasures on the table, which seemed hardly worth the dusting that their mistress must have given them to make them look so clean. But doubtless these poor relics were precious to their owner, and possibly suggestive of some family remembrance, or they would not have been kept and tended with such care.

The polish of the tins deserved the highest praise. They really seemed to brighten the wretched, windy shed, and give it quite a homely and habitable look. No wonder their poor mistress took some pride in their appearance, for she modestly avowed that she had cleaned them all herself.

"We're poor enough," she added, "but I can't abear no dirt, I can't. And no more can't my son neither, though it's a bit more in his line like, seein' as he lives by it. He's a shoeblack, he is; an' if boots didn't get dirty, why they'd never want no cleanin', and that 'ud be a baddish job for him, and 'underds sech as he—them as has to get their livin' by the brush. Yes, they're mices 'oles they are, an' ratses 'oles as well too. We've plenty of 'em here we have. Don't want to go an' pay a shillin' for to see 'em at the Soho Logicals. Don't see 'em much by day, we don't, but they comes out pretty bold when it's a bit darkish. 'Pon my word they does, an' there, you 'ardly would believe it, but at night they squeal an' squeak so, it's for all the world like being at a con-sort. That's why we keeps that little dog there. If it worn't for him a barkin', they'd reglar eat us up a'most, when we're a sleepin'! Speshly my poor son, 'cause he've his bed upon the floor there—yes, sir, 'tis me sleeps in the bed, both me an' the young person as is a lodgin' here, you know."

This young person was out working, and bore a fair repute for industry and tidiness.

"She wouldn't be a living here else," said the woman somewhat sternly. "I can't abide no dirt, an' I can't abide no hidleness, an' where you finds the one, you mostly finds the hother. But she's a good girl is Mariar, an' she works 'ard to hearn a livin'. Nor she don't fling it away neither in finery an' fal-lala. And my boy, too, he's a good 'un, and he works 'ard too for his livin'. A rare good son is Tom, though he's baddish in the 'ead a' times. Tries all'ys to ack right, he do, though a bit wrong in his mind, poor chap. I were laid up wi' the fever, an' I weaned him on

cold water, 'cause times were baddish, then, an' we couldn't buy no milk for him. Mebbe that's what's made him weak like. But I dunno as it's 'armed 'im. Half a hidiot, some calls him, but he's more nor half a good 'un. He's a Teetottler, is my Tom, an' never done no 'arm to nobody. An' he works 'ard for his livin' an' helps his mother too, an' never takes no drink, an' goes to gospel reglar, an' all the neighbours likes him an' respects him too, they does; from a child to a queen's son they're all'ys glad to see him, an' 'tain't a many boys with more brains than my Tom, as can say as much as that, you know."

It was little wonder that the poor widow grew voluble when having for her subject the virtues of her son, who, she said, pursued his calling in the streets hard-by, and would be twenty-five when his next birthday came. Her mention of a queen's son was of course a figure of speech, and intended to convey a notion of high excellence. But if any royal scion were placed beside her Tom, the one who would attain the higher favour in her eyes certainly would be the boy of lower birth.

Being questioned as to other members of her family, she owned that she had had six children, but now five of them were dead, having been outlived by the weakling, her first-born, of whose goodness the poor mother appeared so justly proud. Dull-witted as he was, the clear light of Christ's teaching had peered into his mind.

"He seems to understan' it much better nor I do," she explained, a little smiling, as though at her own ignorance, and the wisdom of her son. "And he ack up to it a deal more," she continued to remark. "There ain't a better Christian in all England, that there ain't. Not among the poor, nor yet among the rich, there ain't any man alive as try to do his duty better'n my poor boy. But he've reglar got religion in him, that's where it is, you know. Seems a'most to have been born in 'im, for he've never larned his letters. Ah, it's a rare thing is religion, 'speshly with the poor it is."

This she said without a smile, although there was a shade of irony, perhaps, in the assertion—taken literally, at least, and according to the common meaning of the words. Commenting on a text that hung beside the bed, she added: "'As one whom his mother comforteth.' Ah, that's often brought me comfort like, when I've been cryin' about my children. I couldn't comfort of 'em much, poor souls, while

they was a living. But I make no doubt they're all in comfort now they're dead."

She answered heartily, "God bless you!" when we said good-bye to her, and she even caught my hand and kissed it, I confess to my surprise. I had given her no alms, nor was known to her in any way, nor had I promised any help in the dark days that might come to this poor dweller in a shed. Perhaps her mother's heart was touched by the thought of her lost children; and possibly she felt in need of some new outlet for her tenderness and love.

THE ETHICS OF TOBACCO.

MR. RICHARD JEFFERIES, in one of those delightful books of his which bring the sights, and sounds, and smells of country life to one's very fireside, chronicles a notable thing. He says that the farmers about the downs where he so loves to ramble, have taken to smoking cigars. At auction sales and other gatherings of a festive character, sherry and cigars are now produced in place of the old-fashioned "churchwarden" and October ale. Such an innovation is clearly one of the signs of the times, in which the tendency is to amalgamate classes. When peers' sons become wine-merchants and stockbrokers; when scions of titled families serve in merchant-steamers; when working-colliers become Members of Parliament; and when, generally, caste distinctions are one by one disappearing in this country as surely as we are told they will do in India—things which at one time would have been deemed incongruous, uncouth, and absurd, become now perfectly rational and proper.

In the abstract, of course, there is not and never was any reason why one man should not smoke a cigar as well as another, if he prefers it and can afford it. In practice, however, the aristocratic cigar not only ranked several degrees higher in the social scale than the lowly pipe, but even its uses were unknown to Mansie Wauch and the douce baillies of Dalkeith. Yet even if the difficulties of these worthy plebs with the ducal Regalias be regarded as a pleasant exaggeration, there was aforesaid a certain invisible line drawn through society. The man below that line who indulged in a cigar was pretty sure to be sneered at as a "snob." The man above that line who demeaned himself, save in secret, with the humble pipe ran the awful

risk of being dubbed by his fellows a "cad." It mattered not that the word cigar is rather a wide one—wide enough to embrace the eighteenpenny Regalia of the gilded youth and the twopenny smoke with which 'Arry makes Bank Holidays hideous. Tobacco—or anything resembling it—rolled into a thin cylindrical form was, once upon a time, genteel; tobacco cut and burned in an open vessel was low. But we have changed all that. My lord may soothe himself with a common cutty, while his man basks behind a mendacious Havannah—both without impropriety. The dainty cigarette alone has not as yet found favour among the lower orders.

It is not to be lost sight of that this class-distinction with regard to tobacco was a British peculiarity. In Spain the cigarette is the common property of grandee and muleteer; in Germany the cigar rules from Kaiser to cobbler; in Eastern countries cigarette and chibouk are both universal.

In considering the ethics of the subject, then, we perceive first of all that tobacco is a great leveller. As many an angry quarrel has been averted by the offer of a timely pinch of snuff, so many a friendship has found its beginning in the exchange of cigar-cases, the supplying of the "fill" of a pipe, or the proffer of a light. Do not let us smile at the suggestion as a "trifle." Human life is often called a sum of trifles, but it is so short that we should hesitate to sneer at anything as a trifle, which can produce one moment's joy or one moment's care.

That smoking has become much more universal during the last twenty years or so admits of no question. The tobacco duties show it, and we have the evidence of our own senses if our memories can carry us far enough back. It is not so very long ago that smoking-carriages attached to railway-trains were the exception and not the rule. Now, the anti-tobacconists lament this on physiological as well as on moral grounds. We do not propose to consider the physiological aspects, for where doctors differ we will not presume to diagnose. The present writer has been a moderate smoker for twenty years, and conscientiously believes that he has been the better and the happier for the moderate indulgence, but we have no desire to argue from the particular to the general in this matter.

The ethics of the tobacco question, however, form a fair subject for examination.

It is urged by the anti-tobacconists that the practice of smoking is a selfish one—that it engenders indifference to the comfort and the feelings of others, and that it has had a direct influence in deteriorating the manners of our generation. They also urge that it encourages drinking, but therein we think they “do protest too much.” Some of the worst and most hopeless drunkards we have known, were non-smokers, and per contra, some of the heaviest smokers were teetotalers. There is no necessary connection between the two practices; at the same time the man who is intemperate by nature will err to excess in smoking as well as in everything else. Anti-tobacconists very often commit the same mistake as teetotalers, that, namely, of falling from excess of zeal into intemperance of advocacy.

There can be no doubt, for instance, that King James went a great deal too far in his “Counterblaste,” and so also did Sir Grey Palmer, who, in 1621, declared in the House of Commons “That if tobacco be not banished it will overthrow one hundred thousand men in England; but it is now so common that I have seen ploughmen take it as they are at plough.” And yet ploughmen have gone on taking it for two hundred and sixty years, while the country has gone on adding to its population and its wealth. There must have been many more than ploughmen, however, who in Sir Grey Palmer’s days patronised the weed, for an order appears on the journals of the “House” itself in the same century, that “No member do presume to smoke tobacco in the gallery, or at the table of the House, sitting at committees,” which were very proper regulations. It was evidently about the same time that the use of tobacco was forbidden to schoolmasters, as related by Dr. Robert Chambers in the Book of Days. Yet the popularity which it had even then attained to is evident from the boldness with which the students of Christ Church, Oxford, sang its praises even before the face of King James himself. They appeared in the curious drama by Barton Holiday, called Technogamia; or, the Marriage of the Arts, in which, to the disgust of the royal anti-tobacconist, occurred a song to tobacco, beginning:

Tobacco’s a musician,
And in a pipe delighteth,
It descends in a close
Through the organs of the nose
With a relish that inviteth;

and so on through half-a-dozen verses.

It is not without significance, in considering the ethics of tobacco, that to the use of it in England we are indebted to some of the bravest gentlemen and most intrepid adventurers which the country has ever produced. In “the golden age” of Elizabeth, valour and gentle manners went hand in hand, and the great queen herself, it is said, looked on smilingly while Sir Walter Raleigh blew the gentle weed. The story goes, that she made a wager with him that he could not weigh the smoke he emitted from his pipe. Raleigh thereupon weighed a pipeful of pure Virginia, smoked it calmly out, then weighed the ashes, and deducting the one weight from the other, showed the product as the weight of his smoke. The queen thereupon paid the wager, with the witty remark: “Many labourers in the fire have I heard of, who turned their gold into smoke, but Raleigh is the first who has turned smoke into gold.” The first may be, but assuredly not the last, as the descendants of the wealthy Glasgow tobacco-merchants, and as the extensive manufacturers of our own day can show if they choose.

When Charles Lamb railed at the “sooty retainer of the vine,” and “brother of Bacchus,” he endorsed, apparently, the censure of those who contend that smoking encourages drinking. But again, gentle though inconstant Elia repented of his harshness, and atoned by a torrent of endearments. Let us distinguish, however, between use and abuse, and do not let us too hastily condemn as a curse that which to so large a proportion of our fellow-creatures is a blessing.

And that unquestionably must be regarded as a blessing which helps to round off many of the sharp corners of life. The moral influence of the weed is great in its soothing effects. It helps to dispel evil humours and it fosters gentle fancies. “There is a certain substantial kind of satisfaction in smoking, if kept in moderation,” said Professor Huxley to the British Association, “and I must say this for tobacco: that it is a sweetener and equaliser of the temper. It is true,” he added, “that nothing is worse than excessive smoking, but any one could destroy himself with the excessive use, say of tea, or of any other article of diet.” Johnston, in his Chemistry of Common Life, says, that among smokers he has fancied that some “have discovered a way of liberating the mind from the trammels of the body, and of thus giving it a freer range and more undisturbed

liberty of action." Be this as it may, it is certain that many of our wisest thinkers and best writers have been and are smokers.

We remember, a number of years ago, falling in with a queer parody on one of Swinburne's songs, which began in this way:

If love were dhudeen olden,
And I were like the weed,
Oh, we would live together,
And love the jolly weather,
And bask in sunshine golden,
Rare pals of choicest breed,
If love were dhudeen olden,
And I were like the weed.

This offers to us another view, viz., the uniting influence of tobacco. There is a brotherhood among smokers, which has developed a school of courtesy and kindness of its own, and which, like freemasonry, is superior to the accidental barriers of class. So far from deteriorating our manners, then, we hold that tobacco has had a mollifying and refining effect. The boor who chokes you with a blast from his vile dhudeen as he passes you in the street, is no more a type of the smoker than the boisterous roughs of a London, or a Manchester, or a Glasgow crowd are types of Englishmen. Studied posturing and genuflecting were the evidences of good manners in the days of the Regency, but in so far as manners connote morals, we imagine there can be no comparison between that age and our own. A gentleman of our day, we take it, is on the whole a more exalted creature, with his cigar or pipe, than was the gentleman of the last century with his dangled cane and snuff-box.

Salvation Yeo was extravagant in his laudation when he declared that, "When all things were made, none was made better than tobacco, to be a lone man's companion, a bachelor's friend, a hungry man's food, a sad man's cordial, a wakeful man's sleep, and a chilly man's fire. There's no herb like it under the canopy of heaven." We deprecate extravagance of praise, however, as we protest against intemperance in condemnation. But there is a sufficient substratum of truth in Salvation Yeo's claims to demonstrate that the ethical as well as the material influences of tobacco are great.

Certainly, for one thing, more literature has been cultivated with the aid of the weed than with the "little oatmeal" affected by the early Edinburgh Reviewers.

GERALD.

BY ELEANOR C. PRICE.

CHAPTER III. CUT SHORT.

THEO of course knew a great many of the wedding guests, and had plenty to do in helping Mrs. Fraser to entertain them. She always liked old people, and she was deep in talk with an old lady about her dogs, having apparently forgotten that there was anybody besides this old lady in the world, and not at all knowing that most people had gone in to breakfast, when she became aware that somebody was standing behind her, and looked up hurriedly once more into the face of Mr. Fane.

"Oh, are they gone?" she said, getting up. "I think—will you take Mrs. Campbell, please?"

"No, dear Miss Meynell, certainly not," said Mrs. Campbell with an approving smile. "Nothing so unorthodox. Here is my old friend Colonel Fox coming to take care of me."

Theo was satisfied, and gave herself up to Mr. Fane without further difficulty.

"I really forgot," she said, as they went into the dining-room. "Dogs are such a nice subject, and Mrs. Campbell has seven in the house. I don't know, though, whether it is good to scatter one's affections in that way."

"Do you centre yours in one dog?" said Mr. Fane.

"Yes. One dog and one horse. I have never been allowed to have any more."

"But then it is so horrid if the one dies," he said.

"It puts them more on the footing of human friends, and that is good," said Theo. "Why shouldn't we grieve for them? they give us pleasure enough; more, I think, than human friends do—dear faithful things."

"No; human friends are the best, just because they change, and disappoint one," said Mr. Fane. "And, after all, they may live as long as we do ourselves; the dogs and horses can't, so they are a certain grief—and if you have only one of each——"

"What do you mean?" said Theo, looking at him earnestly.

It seemed as if he did not dare to give her more than a glance back.

"What do I mean?" he repeated in a low voice.

"You seem to think that one's friends ought to change, and disappoint one. I don't understand."

"Nor do I. Only they always do. so it

is as well to be hardened. Dogs spoil one with their faithfulness. I suppose that may have been what I meant," he said, looking down and smiling. He was by no means so unconscious as Theo, and had at that moment caught a curious, amused look from the bride, whose interest in herself and her husband was not so exclusive as to prevent her from watching her cousin.

Gerald Fane was quite quick enough to see and feel the whole state of the case. Since he had taken Theo away from Mrs. Campbell, he had begun to be happy; till then his whole time had been spent in regretting that he had come. Why could not John Goodall have found one of his own friends? Gerald had had no idea that the excellent fellow was not marrying in his own line of life, and he had come for fun, for adventure, for a new experience among a new set of people. Circumstances had made the poor wretch as proud as Lucifer, and, of course, he had not been half an hour in Linwood before he found himself in a false position, and was inwardly swearing at his own foolishness. As the people came into the church he saw that they were people of his own sort, and not of Goodall's; but, of course, they could only regard him as belonging to Goodall. But then Theo came and stood there, and no one else, not even himself, could be thought of afterwards. Now he was sitting close to her, and it was their duty to talk to each other. He could only talk nonsense, and the worst of it was she would not be satisfied. He did not want to talk at all, only to look at her, but that could not be, and perhaps it was only a long absence from civilised society which put such a daring thought into his head. It was a good thing after all that she took him quite seriously, and went on with the argument.

"Are friends so bad as that? It is a sad way of looking at it," she said. "When I said that dogs gave one more pleasure, I think I meant that one's dog really belongs to one, in a way that no human friend can. But it is very sad to say that one's friends always change, and disappoint one. Sometimes they do—now and then."

"About those things we all speak from our own experience," said Mr. Fane. "I have no doubt your friends are faithful to you."

"I am fortunate, then," said Theo, half to herself.

She was silent for a moment, and then

turning away from him, began to talk to somebody on the other side of her.

There were no speeches, and Helen very soon went away to change her dress. Theo followed her, and the bride found an opportunity to say, with a mischievous laugh:

"Well, Theo, how do you like the manager?"

"Who is the manager?" said Theo.

"Why, Mr. Fane. I told you he was manager of a colliery."

"I forgot. Are they all like that?"

"I don't suppose they are all so good-looking," said Helen, much amused.

"Is he good-looking? He talks nicely about dogs. I must ask him presently whether he likes horses. Perhaps in some ways they are better than dogs."

"Well, my dear, don't talk to me about them now. I am not a young man, and I don't want to be amused. I never in my life saw you look so handsome as you did in church, Theo."

"Did I? I'm very sorry. I did not mean to talk about dogs, but what I meant was, are all the managers gentlemen?"

"I don't know, my dear; ask Mr. Fane himself," said Helen, laughing. "Now here's mamma, so we can't say any more, and you are no good to-day, Theo. I never saw you so dreamy."

Gerald Fane, meanwhile, was standing about downstairs, keeping apart from other people, and wondering how much more he should see of Miss Fraser's beautiful bridesmaid. There was to be a dance that evening, and he had been asked to stay the night. He wondered how many times she would dance with him. As he stood with his eyes on the ground, glanced at curiously by different people, but taking no notice of them in return, he was resolving that to-day and to-night, for once, he would be happy. He would forget all the horrors and troubles of which life was so full, and would think it was six years ago, before he knew the meaning of hard work and anxiety. She of course knew nothing of his position. Why should she? Perhaps they would never meet again; it would be best not, as far as he was concerned, but that thought interfered horribly with present enjoyment. Then Gerald, who was not without a sense of the ridiculous, smiled at himself for a hopeless fool, and thought how all these people would laugh, and laugh with reason, if they knew that a stray pauper like himself had fallen desperately in love with Miss Meynell.

Then the ladies came downstairs, and

the carriage drove up, and there was a great confusion. John Goodall came up to young Fane, wished him good-bye, and thanked him in a jolly sort of manner, nearly wringing his hand off. "We shall meet again in the Midlands," said John cordially. Gerald Fane forgot to be grateful, and wished that the Midlands were in the middle of Africa.

As for Theo, she took no notice whatever of the best man, standing rather dimly in the background, but fulfilled all her own duties of saying good-bye, and flinging rice, with an odd mixture of energy and dreaminess, and then, when they had driven off and all was over, suddenly turned round to her cousin, Captain North, and went away with him into the library. The room was large, and dark, and still, with small red flames dancing in the grate. A sense of peace and rest came over Theo; the quietness was so pleasant to her that she forgot at first to ask Hugh what he wanted. She leaned back in a large arm-chair, and smoothed with both hands the creamy satin and lace of her gown.

"Do you like this dress?" she said. "Am I to wear it all day? What is the matter, Hugh?"

Captain North was not looking at her or her gown. His eyes were fixed on the hearthrug at his feet; he was frowning a little, and stroking his thick moustache.

"Well, Theo," he said, "everyone else is in such a fuss that I thought I had better tell you myself. Did you see—just before breakfast—they brought me a telegram?"

"Hugh!" She started from her chair and came towards him, turning as white as her gown.

She terrified Captain North, who thought he was breaking bad news most considerably.

"Don't be frightened," he said. "Don't look like that, Theo. It's only that I don't like asking you to come away to-day. In fact, I don't think I ought. It will spoil the party, but I couldn't somehow go myself without telling you."

"Uncle Henry is worse?" said Theo, seeing by his calmness that her first fear was not true. "May I see the telegram?"

It was crumpled up in her cousin's hand. He unfolded it, and read the few words:

"Colonel North worse. Better come by next train."

"From Dr. Page," he said. "Well, you see, Theo, I shall have to start in three-quarters of an hour—and of course one

doesn't know—and I really think you had better stay quietly here till you hear from me. I rather wish now that we had not both left him, but that's no use. You will do as I ask you? You and Combe couldn't possibly be ready in three-quarters of an hour."

"Oh, indeed, I wish I hadn't left him," cried Theo in bitter grief. "I never would, for any one but Helen. You don't think I could stay here, and dance, and make a fool of myself all the evening, while he will be wanting me and asking for me? You know he will. Three-quarters of an hour! I could be ready in one, and I shall be thankful to get away from this wedding. I think weddings are the most dreadful, miserable inventions——"

"Very well," said Captain North gravely. "But if you are really going, give Combe as much time as you can. I will tell Mrs. Fraser."

So the poor best man, lingering in the hall, only caught one glimpse of his lady, as she came out of the library and went away upstairs without even a look in his direction. Presently one of the numerous Fraser cousins came and talked to him, and carried him off into the garden, and involved him in a game of tennis. Later in the day he heard quite casually that Miss Meynell was gone. People were giving plenty of reasons and particulars, but these were nothing to him. She was gone; everything was a vain show; and through the long tiresome evening, though he danced and talked like everyone else, he could only wish over and over again that he had never come to Linwood.

CHAPTER IV. LADY REDCLIFF.

LADY REDCLIFF was a very fierce little old woman indeed. She wore a black cap, and believed in nothing. She had had a few friends, who remained faithful to her till she was over sixty; but after that they dropped off one by one, being quite unable to bear with the increasing sharpness of her tongue. Her remarks were sometimes so violently personal as to madden the meekest of them, and these are not the days of meekness. In these days the youngest and smallest people have their rights, and the oldest and most important grandmothers must respect them, unless they wish to be met with open rebellion.

The only person to whom Lady Redcliff behaved decently was her grand-daughter, Theo Meynell, and this was not because of any of her nice qualities, but because she

had what Lady Redcliff called with satisfaction, "the Meynell temper." All sorts of legendary old Meynells looked flashing out from Theo's eyes sometimes, when she was angry and scornful; and these moments were the grandmother's delight, though the anger was often against herself. She enjoyed telling Theo, whenever she was angry, about an old Lord Redcliff who killed his French cook because a game-pie was burnt, and above all things he loved game-pie.

"He ought to have been hanged," said Theo.

"Oh dear no; people were not such fools then," said Lady Redcliff. "He got a better cook, and lived to eat thousands more pies."

When Theo showed the strength of her will in some decided way, Lady Redcliff might remark:

"There was a woman in our family once who wanted to marry a man, but he preferred somebody else who had more money. I believe he liked Theodosia best, however—she was a namesake of yours, you perceive—but that had nothing to do with it; he was going to marry the other one. Well, very early on the wedding morning, Theodosia poisoned the woman, or chloroformed her, or something; dressed herself in white and went to church, and married the man in spite of everybody. Nobody ever stops the Meynells from having their own way. Nobody wanted that girl to marry your father—certainly I didn't—but he chose that she should, I never can imagine why. A, milksop, Calvinistic set of people——"

"Hush, grandmamma!" said Theo.

"Why am I to hush?" said the old woman sharply.

"Because if you talk about my mother's family you will drive me out of the house."

"You can go if you like," said Lady Redcliff; but she took up a newspaper, and said no more just then. Presently, after glancing once or twice at Theo over the top of it, she muttered half to herself: "There's not much North blood in you, anyway. That stupid Redcliff and his brothers and sisters are not Meynells at all; they're Hardwick all through, and that's skim milk turned sour."

It was a Sunday afternoon in August; hot and weary everywhere, hottest and weariest in Lady Redcliff's stuffy back drawing-room, where she liked to sit all day with doors and windows closed. The look-out over roofs and a few dusty trees

had not much cheerfulness in it. Lady Redcliff, pinched and yellow, was wrapped in a large black shawl. With her long nose, and trembling, bony fingers, she looked like the horrid old spider who had caught a poor young fly—Theo—in her web. Theo herself was all in black, too, and looked pale and languid; she wanted fresh air for mind and body, and the book she was trying to read did not interest her much, for her eyes often wandered up, past the heavy shadow of curtains, to those dingy tree-tops that hardly stirred, and the faint far-away blue of sky behind them.

"You have plenty of faults without being a humbug," said Lady Redcliff. "What's the use of pretending to be good, and to read sermons, when you are raging against me in your heart all the time?"

"I am doing neither one thing nor the other," said Theo quietly. "It is that book on South Africa."

"Are you going to South Africa to get away from me? Never mind, I shall die soon, and then you can go where you like."

"I am not obliged to stay with you now," said Theo.

"Thank you; that is a very pretty, grateful speech indeed. And of course I am obliged to have you, if you choose to stay. Your uncle, who announced so finely that he was going to take your father's place, and so forth, and who kept you away from me for years because he did not think me pious enough to speak to such a treasure, having chosen to die and leave you dependent on anyone who likes to take up the great responsibility—it has become my duty, it seems, to sacrifice all my peace and comfort to you! But of course you are not obliged to stay with me a day longer than you like. Good gracious!" said Lady Redcliff, throwing the newspaper into a corner. "You are a little too cool, Miss Theo—you really are."

"I did not mean it in that way," said Theo, now as red as she had been pale before.

"Don't make excuses, I hate them. I am neither deaf nor blind, nor an idiot, and I understood you perfectly well. I think your precious uncle brought you up abominably, and did his best to spoil everything that was fine in your character. And what he meant by making all those professions, and leaving you nothing after all, is certainly a tremendous puzzle. I should like to know how you explain it to yourself."

Theo got up, and walked towards the door.

"Stop a minute," said her grandmother. "Before you lose your temper completely, let me give you one piece of advice. Follow your cousin's example, and marry a snob. Any snob you like; I'll give you my blessing and my diamond necklace. But listen; if you marry Hugh North, I'll give you nothing—nothing."

"Grandmamma, what makes you so dreadful this afternoon?" said the girl almost imploringly.

Then, with a certain noble sweetness, she went up to the poor angry old woman, and laid her hand on her shoulder.

"Don't touch me," said Lady Redcliff, snatching herself away. "I hate the Norths, and you know it. If George had married anyone else, he might have been alive now. What business had she to die, and leave him to go his own way?"

"Hush! you forget; you are talking of my mother," said Theo.

"I don't forget. You never let me forget anything disagreeable."

"Look here, grandmamma; you don't really want to hurt me, I know, but you do hurt me when you talk like that of my Norths, and especially of Uncle Henry, whom I loved with all my heart."

"Why shouldn't you be hurt as well as other people? I have been hurt often enough, and by people who pretended to love me," said her grandmother. "Don't be a fool! Why didn't your dear uncle leave you anything?"

"I never thought or expected that he would," said Theo.

"Everyone else did, then."

"No, grandmamma; not people who knew about his affairs."

"Rubbish! he had plenty of money to do what he liked with. He had a great deal more than his sisters, and they were not badly off, but they married men who spent their money, and Henry North was a miser. That Fraser man muddled away every penny of his first wife's money, and your father spent it rationally," said Lady Redcliff with an odd grimace. "But that's nothing to the point. What I say is, don't delude yourself with the idea that your uncle was a poor man. He lived quietly enough, to be sure, down there in that hole, but all the Norths are misers—your Norths, as you call them. I don't think it is a property to be proud of."

"There are a few things you don't know, grandmamma," said Theo earnestly.

"Are there, really?" said Lady Redcliff, who was talking herself into a better

humour. "Well, I never pretended to be as knowing as you."

"Uncle Henry may have had plenty of money to begin with; I believe he had," said Theo. "But there was a man he liked very much, a good deal younger than himself, and of course his junior in the service; but he was in his regiment for some time, and they were friends to quite an unusual extent, you know. This man left the army, and went in for some speculations. He persuaded Uncle Henry to put a great deal of money into them, and then he turned out all wrong, and swindled everybody who had trusted him. Uncle Henry lost much more than anyone else, but it was owing to him that the man was let off easily, because he used to like him so much, and did not believe it was quite all his fault. So it was hushed up, and Hugh believes the man is alive still, but he does not know what has become of him."

"Swindling comfortably on somewhere, no doubt," said Lady Redcliff. "It would have been more philanthropic to punish him."

"So Hugh thinks. He does not agree with his father about that, but it happened long ago, when he was young, so he had nothing to do with it. He hates the man," said Theo, in soft, thoughtful tones. "I never saw him look so angry as when he told me about him the other day. He hates to think of Uncle Henry being taken in, and it is a horrid story, certainly."

"Quite thrilling, but I wouldn't tell it much, if I were you," said Lady Redcliff. "This wicked world laughs at people who are neither clever, wise, nor hard, you know. There, don't flash; your little tempers tire me. Where does your cousin get his money from, then? I know he has a good deal of his own."

"His mother had a fortune, and it was settled upon him," answered Theo.

"His mother's relations must have been canny people," said Lady Redcliff. "Saints like Henry North generally manage to have no settlements at all."

"I suppose you hate the Norths because they are good," said Theo.

She had walked away to the window, and was standing in the shadow of the curtains, looking up at the sky.

"And is that the reason why you love them, you little Pharisee?" sneered Lady Redcliff.

Something in the look of her eyes, fixed on the tall, beautiful figure of the girl

standing there, seemed curiously to belie her way of talking, and Theo, perhaps, knew her grandmother well enough to feel this, though she did not look towards her in return.

"At any rate," she said, "I suppose I love them because they have been so good to me."

"Well, that's true, and they had nothing to gain by it," said Lady Redcliff. "But Hugh's goodness now may not be quite so disinterested. When did he tell you this history of the losses? Since his father's death?"

"Yes; a few weeks ago, when he came here the first time."

"And why did he tell it you at all?"

"I think I have an idea," said Theo dreamily.

"Out with it, then. I want to finish this stupid talk and go to sleep."

"I think he thought I might fancy—that I might, perhaps, be disappointed at Uncle Henry's leaving me nothing—and so he wished me to understand about the affairs, don't you see?"

"He said nothing about making it up to you in the future?"

"No, grandmamma. How could he? What do you mean? Of course he did not allude to my being disappointed at all."

"In fact, he was gentlemanlike and considerate, as the Norths always are. I suppose he knows all about your affairs?"

"Yes," said Theo.

"Your poor little three hundred a year, which you will find a sad pinch now that Uncle Henry has deserted you. You will have to depend on yourself, you know. I can't have you always living here, though I don't mind you for a visit now and then. We have had enough of each other already, that's the truth; we shall quarrel mortally if you stay much longer. Where will you go when you leave me?"

"I don't know," said Theo.

She had probably heard this before, for it did not seem to make much impression on her, as she stood gazing out of the window. After a minute Lady Redcliff said abruptly:

"Hugh North will ask you to marry him."

"He won't; you are quite mistaken," said Theo, turning round with an air of magnificent disdain.

"He will. Don't you know that I am a witch? I know the future. I can tell

your fortune, my pretty lady; give me that white hand of yours."

Theo put her hands behind her and stood motionless.

"He shall be a dark man," the old woman went on in a sort of beggar's whine. "No fair man is fit for the likes of you, my darling." Then suddenly changing into her natural tone, she said: "He will, Theo. What shall you say to him if he does?"

"No, of course," said Theo. "But he wouldn't be so foolish. Oh, it is too horrid to talk like this! I am going out for a walk."

"Go, then. I am glad enough to get rid of you," said Lady Redcliff. "Take Combe; you are not to go by yourself."

Theo rushed upstairs to Combe, and hurried her and herself out of the house in an angry, excited way. Combe was not surprised; her mistress generally came out of the drawing-room in these moods, after a long talk with Lady Redcliff.

Out of doors a little coolness was beginning to breathe in the air; so Theo thought, at any rate, in the first minutes of her escape from that oppressive house. Then a flush of heat came over her, for she and Combe had hardly crossed the square when Captain North met them. He was cool, and kind, and calm as usual. Theo could have laughed as she thought of her grandmother's words, and yet hated the little confusion that was inseparable from the memory of them; but her feelings were quite hidden from Captain North.

"Now you may go to church, Combe," he said, in his old matter-of-fact way, "and leave Miss Theo to me. I'm come to take care of her."

"Thank you, sir. It's too late for church," said Combe.

"Well, go and see your friends, or something."

"Go for a walk, Combe; don't go back into that horrid, stuffy house," said Theo; and then, with a feeling of relief and peace, all disagreeables forgotten, she walked cheerfully away with Hugh.

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A Journal

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A DRAWN GAME.

BY BASIL.
AUTHOR OF "LOVE THE DEBT," ETC.

CHAPTER XXX. "PICTURE IT—THINK OF IT, DISSOLUTE MAN!"

THE policeman's gallantry was to some extent inspired by the suspicion, or certainty rather, that it was a case of attempted suicide, which, getting into the police-court and the newspapers, would cover him with glory. From a distance, and from the opposite side of the mill-race, he had seen the two sitting together; had then seen Archie leave her, seemingly stunned by his desertion; and finally had seen Anastasia rise suddenly and fling herself, as it seemed, headlong into the current. He had not the least doubt, therefore, that it was the old, old story of a love-lorn maiden seeking to end her sorrow with herself. Not being himself sentimental, he had no sympathy with such mawkishness, and was, therefore, aggrieved and gruff in his manner.

"What did you do that for?" he asked her querulously, as he wrung the wet from his tunic. "I say, what did you do it for?" he repeated more petulantly, shaking the stunned Anastasia by the shoulder.

He spoke as peevishly as though she had pushed him for sport into a puddle. But Anastasia, half-drowned and wholly dazed as yet, said nothing.

"Do you know that it's six weeks?" bending aside to catch the horror of her expression at this announcement. It was all very well to face death, but to face a police-magistrate! She couldn't have considered this. "Six weeks!" he repeated.

"Six weeks! What's six weeks?" asked Anastasia, bewildered, though she

"An attempt to commit suicide. It's six weeks for an attempt."

"Do you suppose I threw myself in?"

"I don't suppose nothin', miss—I seed ya."

"You saw me! You saw me stretching out to reach a branch and I over-reached myself——"

"But not the law, miss; not the law. You'll not over-reach the law," interrupted the constable with a quickness which surprised and delighted himself.

"You want money, and I'm willing to pay you for saving my life," said Anastasia haughtily and indignantly, thinking she had got the key to the constable's offensive charge and manner. But she had not got it at all.

He was perfectly convinced that it was a case of attempted suicide, and assured that such a bribe as she could offer him would be poor compensation for the praise and promotion his rescue and arrest of her would secure him. But he was naturally delighted by this proffer of a bribe, which, when related in court, would at once confirm his charge and enhance his glory.

"I want nothin' for doing my duty, miss; and I'll take nothin' for not doing it," an epigrammatic way of putting his disinterested and incorruptible devotion to duty, which told strikingly afterwards in court.

For the case came into the Rye-cote police-court, not without Anastasia's secret concurrence. On second thoughts it occurred to her that nothing would advance her designs upon Archie better than this belief in her attempt at suicide. Either Archie would be won back to her by this proof of her desperate devotion to him; or a British jury would be moved to award in a breach of promise case very substan-

unanswerable evidence of wounded affections. Therefore, Anastasia offered only enough resistance and defence to the charge to convince the court that she was anxious to shield, not herself, but her base deserter.

At first she clung feebly to the account she had given the constable; then she said only, and again and again, that she was very unhappy; while at the constable's evidence as to seeing a young man walk away from her just before, she hid her face in her hands, and her whole frame shook with convulsive sobs. But the name of this young man nothing could tear from her.

It was just the part which Anastasia, with her plaintive, appealing, deprecating eyes, could play to absolute perfection.

She played it with such effect that the whole court was moved to tears, and it would have gone hard with that young man if he had been known and at hand. However, as we have said, Anastasia nobly withheld his name. To reveal it would be to mar the effect of this practical appeal to Archie's feelings—her first card.

The case was reported not only in the local papers, but at less length in the London journals; one of which made it the text of a short leader, contrasting the Satanic baseness of our sex with the heavenly nobleness of women. And as this paper had either the largest circulation in the world, or a wider circulation than any other journal—we forget which—Miss Bompas's sublime devotion became extensively known. Mrs. Tuck read of it, and Dick and Ida. Fortunately, Mrs. Tuck and Dick had no idea of Ida's interest in the story.

"Miss Bompas of Heatherley!" exclaimed Mrs. Tuck. "We didn't know we had a heroine so near us." For Heatherley lay between Ryecote and Kingsford. "I shouldn't at all wonder if it was that young Cuthbert of Hazelhurst," she added meditatively. "He deserves horsewhipping, whoever he is, for his heartlessness in allowing the poor girl to stand alone in the dock."

"On the face of it, it was only a lover's quarrel, and the girl's choosing to drown herself doesn't prove the man in the wrong—rather the other way, I should say," drawled Dick.

"Why didn't he come forward then and set himself right?" asked his aunt.

"What! At the girl's expense? You wouldn't give him a lash less of the horsewhip for that."

"Nonsense, Dick. A man who could

drive a girl to suicide is not likely to have much regard for her feelings."

"Drive her to suicide! That's just the question. Did he drive her to suicide? I believe it was all a bit of temper. A girl who could attempt suicide because of a lovers' quarrel is certain to have the temper that makes quarrels. The fellows take it for granted that she was a meek martyr, because she attempted to drown herself, which is just the thing which makes me suspect she was a fury."

Mrs. Tuck was silenced because she couldn't explain that she believed the case to be one—not of a lovers' quarrel—but of heartless betrayal.

Meanwhile Ida had listened in utter wretchedness to the discussion. As it was impossible there could be two women with so singular a name as "Anastasia Bompas" in the world, she had no doubt that this was the girl with whom Archie had got entangled at Cambridge. But was this man, whom every paper abused for his base betrayal and abandonment of her, Archie? She wouldn't, she couldn't, believe it. Yet it was possible. She had that morning got a letter from Mrs. John in which she said that Archie had left home, but she did not know either whither he had gone or when he would return. Why should his going and coming be kept a secret even from his mother?

Again, was it conceivable that this girl should have got entangled with another suitor at the very time when she was attempting, through her mother, a reconciliation with Archie? And what was Archie's description, or suggestion, of the character of the girl to his mother? That she was heartless and mercenary. Could a heartless and mercenary girl love so passionately as to attempt suicide in despair of the return of her attachment? And if she was the very reverse of designing, what became of Archie's account of his entanglement by her?

Ida, racked and tormented by these doubts, passed a day of extreme wretchedness in her room under the pretext of a headache. Here she wrote letter after letter to Mrs. John, tearing up each in turn as unworthy at once of herself, of Mrs. John, and of Archie. Finally she wrote only a short note to ask if the person mentioned in the accompanying newspaper could be the same Miss Bompas whom Archie knew at Cambridge.

But she had not to wait for Mrs. John's answer to have her doubt resolved.

Among Dick's duns was a gentleman of uncertain age, whom Mrs. Tuck held in high regard as Sir Arthur Denzil, a baronet of one of the oldest families, and of one of the largest properties in Great Britain and Ireland. So at least had he been introduced to her by Dick, whose authority for credentials (so irresistible to his aunt) was nothing less than Sir Arthur's own statements. Whether Dick himself accepted them as confidently as he had imparted them to his aunt, is doubtful. All he really knew about Sir Arthur was, that he had met and lost money to him at two or three race-meetings. When Sir Arthur turned up at Kingsford to dun him therefor, Dick dealt with him as young Honeywood dealt with his dun, little Flanagan—introduced him to his aunt as an old friend.

Mrs. Tuck was charmed with Sir Arthur. Had she not known him to be a man of family and property, she would have thought him free and flippant to vulgarity. As it was, she could not sufficiently praise the grace and ease of his manner, and the generosity of his deep interest in their concerns.

For the interest shown by Sir Arthur in their concerns was extraordinary. Having heard casually that Mr. Tuck had made no settlement of his affairs, he was most urgent upon that gentleman in season and out of season to consider the uncertainty of life in general, and of his own life in particular. Mrs. Tuck welcomed Sir Arthur's alliance as likely at least to persuade her husband to settle the promised ten thousand pounds at once upon Ida. Mr. Tuck, however, had, in his nervous state, the feeling about this ten thousand pounds expressed in the old man's proverb, "No stripping before bedtime," no resigning money or power into any hands but those of death. And he had also, of course, the converse feeling that, if he began to strip, it must be bedtime. Therefore, Mrs. Tuck's ding-dong dunning of him at bed and board for this big sum sounded to him like the tolling of a passing-bell, and when she was reinforced by Sir Arthur, who not only urged him to strip, but told him with engaging frankness that it was bedtime, he nearly gave in altogether. He was like a sick sheep, who might have struggled on a good deal longer but for the sight of the vultures wheeling above it in ever narrowing and lowering circles. In a word, it was due to some extent to Sir Arthur's generous interest in

his affairs that Mr. Tuck was now really as ill as he used to fancy himself.

And now it was reserved for Sir Arthur to give him the final blow.

"Has the old fellow another nephew named Guard — Archie Guard — Brabazon?" he asked Dick, as they were knocking about the balls in the billiard-room.

"Another nephew? He's his only nephew."

"What! The heir-presumptive?"

"Yes."

"Phew!" whistled Sir Arthur, stopping in the very act to make a stroke, and straightening himself to look amazed at Dick.

"What about him?" asked Dick, not eagerly at all, but with his usual languid indifference.

"I knew his father."

"That's bad. But, after all, your being his friend could hardly make Mr. Tuck think worse of his worthy brother-in-law than he does already." Sir Arthur scowled, but it wasn't his cue to resent Dick's jest-and-earnest sarcasms.

"I don't know that. At least, I think I could tell him something that would blacken him a shade or two deeper."

"If you could tell him something that would blot his son out once for all, it would be more to the purpose."

"I can do that, too. He's a chip of the old block, and no mistake."

Then Sir Arthur became lost in meditation. While he chalked his cue mechanically, his eyes were fixed on the billiard-table, and his thoughts went wandering far back to old days and scenes.

"Aye, he's a chip of the old block," he repeated, rousing himself, and recalling his thoughts to the present.

Dick, who wouldn't for the world betray any deep interest, and who, in truth, hardly felt any, remained provokingly silent. He knew perfectly well that, as his own and Sir Arthur's interests were identical in this matter, he need neither beg nor buy valuable information from his confederate. Besides, Dick, all his life, hated to raise his hand or open his mouth unnecessarily. Therefore, Sir Arthur was forced at last to give his information unsolicited.

"You know that girl they're making all this bother about—the girl who tried to drown herself?"

"Miss Bompas?"

"Yes. Well, he's the man."

"The fellow who drove her to it? How do you know?"

"Her mother, who's never sober, let it out last night in the Ellerdale Arms. I heard her myself. She said his name was Archie Guard; that he was Squire Tuck's nephew and heir, and that, therefore, he could pay, and must pay, handsomely for his treatment of her daughter."

This was great news for Dick, impassively though he received it. It must destroy Guard's last chance at once of Ida and of The Keep.

After looking at it from all points, he said significantly:

"It's a bad business. I only hope it won't get into the papers, as a scandal of that kind would kill Mr. Tuck."

"Not before he made his will. It would drive him to make his will at once—eh?"

"I suppose it would, if anything would," said Dick, with an assumption of indifference which didn't impose upon Sir Arthur.

"It's safe to get into the papers with that old sponge dropping it about in all the pubs in the place."

"Did she say he had deserted the girl?"

"Yes—'promised her marriage,' which is their way of putting it. He's his father's son all over."

Again Sir Arthur lapsed into meditation upon the past, from which he roused himself to ask Dick about Archie's father. Dick, of course, knew and cared nothing about him, though he would not be sorry to hear of anything to his disadvantage. Therefore, he listened with a growing interest to all Sir Arthur had to tell him to his discredit.

At the close of a long conversation upon this subject, Sir Arthur hurried away on urgent business which would probably involve absence from Kingsford for a couple of days. Still, he found time, before his departure, to act upon Dick's significant hint to communicate to the papers the name of Miss Bompas's betrayer.

For, next morning, Mr. Tuck read this paragraph, headed, "As We Suspected," in the "Ryecote Rights of Man," a fiery Red print:

"The dastardly betrayer of the wretched girl who was saved from suicide—hardly mercifully—by our gallant townsman, Police-constable Skinner, turns out to be, as we suspected, one of the Upper Ten. We must be on our guard against giving names, but we may say he is the nephew

and heir of a squire and county magistrate residing not a hundred miles from Kingsford. As this gentleman is in precarious health, the probability is that before very long his exemplary nephew will succeed to his position in the county and to his seat on the Bench. These be your governors, oh, Israel! Is it not monstrous?"

Mr. Tuck did not, of course, take in the "Ryecote Rights of Man," but a copy had been considerably forwarded to him with this paragraph marked appropriately with red ink. Its effect upon him may be imagined. He had a nervous dread and detestation of publicity of any kind, but publicity of this kind! His infirmity advertised! his speedy death discounted! His will made for him, and made in favour of this—this—— The paper dropped from his hand, and he lay back in his invalid-chair, white, speechless, and trembling.

"What is it? what is it, James!" gasped Mrs. Tuck, as she hurried, terrified, to his side.

He could only point to the paper. But it was not till she had got him back to bed, having given him some brandy, and brought him to somewhat, that she read the paragraph. Here was an unhappy business! Yet it was one of those troubles that are sent plainly for our good. It would disenchant Ida of Archie, and drive Mr. Tuck to make his will.

CHRONICLES OF ENGLISH COUNTIES.

SHROPSHIRE. PART III.

LEAVING Bridgenorth by the Shrewsbury road, some three miles along the way stands a retired village, whose name, Morville, connected with Morbridge, a little farther on, reminds us that we are passing that piece of waste ground called the Moors, in the county of Salop, for which the sheriffs of London and Middlesex do suit and service to this day in Her Majesty's Court of Exchequer. But even if the sheriffs had not appeared to the summons, little harm would have been done, for the City of London, if it ever had any valuable rights in the county of Salop, has long since lost them by disuse. The City sheriffs, it may be remarked, were not the original performers in this pantomime. The lordship of the Moor once belonged to the Knights Hospitallers of Jerusalem, and probably fell into the hands of the City of London

when the English branch of the order was dissolved.

After passing the Moor the road leads to the foot of a long range of hills, the backbone of the shire, and, like the more familiar hills of Chiltern, once a favourite resort of outlaws and robbers. Wenlock Edge is a noted feature of the South Shropshire landscape, but comes to a sudden end by Much Wenlock, where a hollow way, once the terror of travellers, overhung as it was by thickets and haunted by robbers, leads the traveller towards Shrewsbury. One of our earliest tourists, earliest, at least, in the way of taking notes with a view to publication—Welsh Gerald, Archdeacon of St. David's, and a noted churchman and litterateur about the court of Henry Plantagenet—records a visit here on his return from a tour in Wales, his companion being no less a person than Baldwin, Archbishop of Canterbury. "It was in that very year, A.D. 1188, when Saladin, Prince of the Egyptians and Damascenes, by a signal victory got possession of the kingdom of Jerusalem," and the archbishop and his attendants had been preaching the crusade among the Welsh chieftains and their wild followers.

The road over the Edge into Wenlock is described by Gerald as *Mala Platea* or Ill Street, being a hollow way bordered by thickets, and haunted by robbers. The entire length of way indeed from here to "*Malus Passus*," or Malpas, in Cheshire, had an evil reputation for travellers from its nearness to the Welsh border; and the towers of Wenlock were a pleasant sight from the wooded gorge to those who fared southwards, announcing that the worst dangers of the road were passed. The Priory of Wenlock, the cheerful sound of whose bells guided the benighted traveller on his way, although never a very large religious community, was yet of a good deal of importance and influence, and the ruins of the conventual buildings are of sufficient extent to give an interest to the history attached to them. The Priory was originally founded by a Mercian princess, one Milburga, daughter of Merewald, and it may be noted that her sister Mildred also attained saintly rank, and many ancient churches are under their patronage. A pleasant tradition was long current in Corvedale of how Milburga in her youth was beloved by a young and noble pagan; but Milburga would not wed with a heathen, and to avoid his solicitations retired with other holy women to

Wenlock, where they built a chapel and convent, over which Milburga was chosen Prioress. Some years after, the business of the order required her to visit a sister settlement of nuns at Godstow. The way was long and dangerous, and the other nuns earnestly dissuaded her from attempting it. But the prioress, confident in divine assistance, set forth on her way, riding, it is said, a milk-white mule. The nun followed no doubt the old Roman road that ran along Corvedale, a lonely secluded valley shut in between the long escarpment of Wenlock Edge, and the mystic heights of the Cleehills, bordered by forests and wild chases. In this lonely spot some Saxon noble had cleared a strip of ploughland; and now it was seed-time, and the thane himself was on the land watching his serfs as they scattered the seed, and dragged their rude bush-harrows over the soil. The nun's heart sank within her, for in the thane she recognised her old lover, who advanced to bar her passage. Nothing to him were the emblems of her sacred calling, neither to him nor the rude heathens who thronged about their chief ready to do his bidding. The woman he loved was his now, by right of capture; he would marry her after the manner of his ancestors, and carry her off to his hall in the woods. The nun could only appeal to Heaven for help, as she parleyed with her rough lover. Let him respect her honour and her vows, and surely Heaven would reward him with bountiful increase from the seed he was now sowing.

She pointed to the furrow'd field,
Lo! even as she spoke
From the dry seed up sprang green blade
And stalk and full ear broke.

The chief and his men drew back, overpowered with awe at the miracle which had been wrought, and the holy maid rode on her way unharmed.

The reputation of Saint Milburga seems to have spread even beyond the English border, and the Welsh called Wenlock *Llanmeilan*, which is their softened version of Church Milbury. But the sanctity of its founder did not preserve the Priory from desolation, no miracle intervened to save the convent from the fierce Danes, and it was not till after a century or more of abandonment that a new religious foundation was established on the old site by Earl Leofric and his wife, Godiva of legendary fame. The new foundation was for secular canons, a favourite establishment of the Saxons, who took to seclusion

and celibacy^d rather unkindly. After the Conquest these canons were displaced by Roger of Montgomery, the great feudal lord of the district, to make room for a new set of monks from Cluny.

An interesting consequence of the foundation of the Priory, and the reputation of the Cluniac order, is to be traced in the adoption by Fitzalan, Steward of Scotland, the founder of the Stuart line, whose descendants became eventually kings of Scotland and England, of the Cluniac rule in his newly-established monastery at Paisley in Scotland. The Steward of Scotland originally granted to Wenlock Priory, in consideration of its services to Paisley, certain rights and dues in Renfrewshire; but these the monks exchanged for the lordship of Menwode, or Manhood, in Sussex, and the district comprised the three-cornered peninsula, with its one point at Selsea Bill and the other at Hayling Island, which remained attached to Wenlock Priory till the Reformation. Wenlock also had a dependent Priory, or cell, at St. Helens, in the Isle of Wight, and as one of the chief of the thirty religious houses of the order, seems to have spread its influence far and near.

From Wenlock it would be a pleasant pilgrimage to follow the little river Corve from its source down secluded Corvedale, in the footsteps of St. Milburga. The dale is out of the way to anywhere, with no great mansions or populous settlements within its limits, but with fine old churches, testifying to the ancient prosperity of the valley, and here and there stand the mounds of ancient castles, and rings and entrenchments that were there before the castles; a strange wild background are the great, bare Clee Hills, which excite curiosity, mixed with a certain amount of repugnance. They seem to belong to an older world than ours, a world whose records and chronicles are lost. Had people ever reached the summit of the Clee Hills, and what did they see there? Strange weird creatures flitting about, flying lizards and saurians—relics of a primæval world? There is a feeling, too, that great events must have happened here, things strange and terrible, in the dim ages past. And yet tradition has preserved no traces of such things, as far as we can learn, nothing but the footsteps of St. Milburga, or the hoof-marks of her snow-white mule.

About these Clee Hills was a royal forest once, where we find the king's foresters levying "Doverelt," as they call it, on the tenants, little thinking how this was the

Welsh Dovraeth, or lodging-money, that the laws of Howel the Good allot to the prince on his journey. And half-way through our dale lies Castle Holgate, that carries the mind to the pleasant Norman coast where the Sieur of Holgate looked down from his house on the cliffs upon the wide plain of Dives, where William the Conqueror mustered his invading army. For the Sieur of Holgate was a great man under his chief, Roger of Montgomery, and built a castle here to dominate Corvedale; and so the village, which before then was called Stanton, from old Roman walls standing there no doubt, took the name of its lord. The Mauduits had the barony after that, but sold it to Richard Plantagenet, "King of Almagne," and he assigned the castle to the Knights Templars, and then, in some way, it got into the hands of the Howards, who, perhaps, hold it still.

And then, right over the hills and far away, on the other side of Titterstone Clee, lies Cleobury Mortimer, once the chief seat of the powerful historic family of Mortimers, a proud race, owing some of their qualities, perhaps, good and bad, to their descent from Llewellyn the Great. Through these Mortimers, our line of kings may claim to represent the ancient princes of Wales; a claim indeed associated with the awkward incident of Roger, the paramour of the She-wolf of France, hanged at Tyburn.

But few people come through Corvedale now, for the railway carries them on the other side of Wenlock Edge to a sort of spider's-web of junctions at Craven Arms, called after a noted coaching and hunting inn of ancient fame. The most charming railway journey in England is said to be that between Shrewsbury and Craven Arms, and thence to Ludlow, with every variety on the way of wood, and hill, and river scenery.

Half-way between Shrewsbury and Ludlow lies Church Stretton, in a romantic wooded gorge, with the wild Long Mynd rising behind it, in steep, precipitous heights, about which gather sudden tempests and storms, with fogs and snow-wreaths that have been fatal to many wayfarers.

Over beyond the Mynd, in the very lap of the Welsh hills, lies Clun, a secluded little borough, that must be interesting to any student of municipal institutions, with its constitution of a bailiff and thirty burgesses. Here are old customs, Welsh and English, strangely mixed up and intermingled. Old endowments, too, are

here, and a hospital, rich and dignified in its quaint Jacobean quadrangle.

Following the pleasant river Teme for a while, we come to the cheerful village of Bromfield with its quaint old church, close by which are some remains of a small Priory pleasantly placed in the fork of the river just above the junction of the Oney. The place is thus described by Leland: "The house stood betwixt Oney and Temde, Temde runneth nearest to the house itself. It standeth on the left ripe of it. Oney runneth by the bank side of the orchard, by the house touching it with his right ripe, and a little beneath the house is the confluence of Oney and Temde." Altogether a warm, sunny corner, with its orchard sloping to the river, and good fishing from the bank, a place that would reconcile anybody to a religious life.

And here again we may notice the strange names of the rivers hereabouts, names that we cannot safely attribute either to Welsh or Saxon. Temde indeed may pass for Celtic, having the same root as Thame or Thames; but who can make anything of Oney? And Corve is another puzzle, while the Rea, that joins the Severn lower down, is strangely unfamiliar. Rea and Severn indeed remind us of Rhine and Seine, and we have already alluded to Maas and Meuse.

"The scene changes, presenting Ludlow town, and the President's Castle; then come in country dancers, etc." Such are the stage directions in Milton's *Masque of Comus*. And no scene is more full of interest, romance, and sentiment than the first view of Ludlow town and towers from an adjoining height. The pleasant scenery of South Shropshire here concentrates in a grand sweep of hilly country, the hills assuming the dignity of mountains, without their bareness, but fertile to the top, marked out with hedge-rows and copses. Among these hills, above the quick and jubilant river, rises a fine detached bluff, and from its precipitous brow the massive towers of the castle show their hoary tints against the green mountain side, while from the lower part of the slope, the church, with its noble tower and fair proportions, seems to rise in triumph against its ruined and dismantled rival. Between the two cluster the roofs of the pleasant town, and verdant meadows encompass the whole, where fat Herefords graze in the sunshine among the subtle scent of spring flowers and new-mown hay.

Ludlow has not outlived its history nor outgrown it. Time has passed by it gently, and in its varied life, that begins one hardly knows where in fabulous antiquity, it has known no great catastrophe to destroy the outward evidences of its civic life; nor has it even much outgrown or much shrunk from its ancient limits. Old Ludlow was known ere the Saxons came into the land as *Dinan*, a name which conveys a sense of the fort on the hill and the river flowing below; just as other Welsh in their new home in Brittany called their little rock fortress on the Rance by the same name. And this original Welsh name is still preserved in the local name of Denham, an Anglicised form. Even in those remote days the place is supposed to have been famous for its manufacture of woollen cloth, and, when the fort on the hill was abandoned by the Welsh prince who maintained it, it is likely enough that the cloth-weavers still remained. Anyhow, it is pretty evident that the town retained its industry under the Saxon kings when there were coiners at work at a local mint, and when people made enough money to enable them to travel far upon holy pilgrimage.

But from this period the town no longer took its name from the dismantled fort, but from the *Hloew*, or Low, the mound which rose over against the castle hill, and which, under the Saxons, became the meeting-place of the folk-mote. At these meetings, which were attended by all the freemen of the district, armed with sword and spear, with their targets of rough bull's hide slung round their necks, all the business of the district was transacted. When a man inherited or acquired land, he appeared at the folk-mote on the proper law day, and openly maintained his right. If there were any gainsayer, the rival claims were discussed and decided, and the court was ready to carry out its judgment with sword and spear.

It is curious to find that long after these folk-motes had lost their original power, when lawyers and scribes had parcelled out the land into parchment-held divisions, the old fame of the Low, or Mount of Lude, still was remembered. A church had been built upon the site, and in digging away the old tumulus, the workers came upon traces of interments, which were probably pre-historic, but which the church-builders declared to be the relics of three Irish saints, who had been martyred by the heathen in these parts. And

so the bones of these perhaps savage chiefs were placed in richly carved shrines, and people found great efficacy in the relics. But anyhow, after the mound had been levelled, and the church built upon its site, a sort of virtue attached to the place, and we read of Love days, when meetings were held in the church itself, when people met and arranged for the transfer of their lands or holdings without the intervention of lawyers, and this lasted to the end of the thirteenth century.

Thus, as far as Low is concerned, the etymology of Ludlow is pretty clear, but in the Lude there is a difficulty. Probably the word is neither Saxon nor Celtic, but like some fossil bone discovered in the drift, reveals the existence of other races of beings, of whose existence this is the only record.

Among other Saxon institutions at old Ludlow, we find a certain guild of pilgrims, established to afford mutual assistance in such pious enterprises, and that the pilgrims of Ludlow had made themselves known in the world, we may infer from an account of two palmers of Ludlow in the story of Edward the Confessor's ring.

It was at the solemn dedication of the new Abbey on Thorney Island, afterwards to be known as Westminster, that, at the conclusion of the ceremony, when the pomp and splendour of the scene had faded away, a poor unknown wanderer accosted the king, and with gentle boldness demanded alms in the name of St. John the beloved. The king had no money on his person, and his almoner was not within call, and so he slipped from his finger a valuable ring, and handed it to the mendicant, who straightway departed. Some short time after this two English palmers, returning from the Holy Sepulchre, wandered lost and benighted in the Syrian desert. Suddenly an old man, benign and venerable, appeared before the pilgrims, and led them to a cluster of habitations, where they were hospitably entertained for the night. In the morning their guide was again at hand to set them on their way. At the moment of parting the old man's figure became suddenly radiant, as he addressed the palmers, and entrusted them with a sacred mission. They were to seek out King Edward and deliver to him a ring, which the saint placed in their hands. This ring was to be a token to the king that the limit of his earthly pilgrimage was at hand. Within six months after he received the ring King Edward was to pass from this world to join

the saints above. The palmers, awestruck and trembling, proceeded on their way, conscious that they had spoken with some heavenly visitant. Their journey to England was wonderfully rapid and prosperous, and ere long they reached the king's presence, and placed in his hands the ring he had given to the poor wanderer. Then all were convinced that it was indeed St. John himself who had appeared both to king and palmers, and the two latter returned to their homes at Ludlow, to hear presently how the summons of the saint had been obeyed, and the Confessor had departed to the heavenly kingdom.

But the palmers of Ludlow could have had no notion how deeply the Confessor's death would affect the destinies of their native town. Soon after the Conquest, the keen Norman glance discovered the strategical value of the old Welsh fort above the river, and presently a strong castle rose upon the spot. Roger de Montgomery was the great man of the district, but it seems that not he, but one of the De Lacys was the castle builder. Through the De Lacys the castle came to the Mortimers, and finally to the heirs of the Mortimers, the celebrated house of York. All this time the borough continued to exist, and the cloth-making went on prosperously. Men made fortunes in the business, and bought up the estates of the improvident Norman families, and the De Ludlows, who had been weavers in one generation, became great barons in course of time. In the fourteenth century Ludlow was taxed at a higher rate than Shrewsbury, and fourfold higher than Bridgenorth, but at that time its prosperity was evidently declining. The citizens complained bitterly of the weight of taxation and of the doings of the king, who had seized their wool at home and abroad, wherever he found it, to pay for his French wars. The town itself had been surrounded by ramparts in the thirteenth century, and when the wars of the Roses began it became a stronghold of the Yorkists. Thus the town was taken and plundered by the Lancastrians, the castle, it would seem, still holding out; but on the triumph of King Edward the Fourth the place found a certain compensation in the royal favour, and in the castle the young princes were brought up. There is still a chamber in the old ruins which bears the name of the Princes' Chamber. Thus, when King Edward died in London, there was, according to Shakespeare, something like a race between the queen's

brothers and the fateful Richard of Gloucester which should gain the advantage conferred by possession of the infant king and his brother.

"Towards Ludlow, then, for we'll not stay behind,"

cries Gloucester to his then faithful Buckingham. The journey ended fatally for the Rivers faction—for Rivers, Grey, and Vaughan—who were seized on the way, and hurried off to execution at Pontefract. It must have been a sad journey for the young princes with their stern uncle—the shadow of the dark Tower brooding over them—from Ludlow, with as little pomp and retinue as might be.

When Henry the Seventh, strong in Welsh attachment, was securely seated on the throne, he resolved to put the government of Wales and its borders on a new footing. Hitherto the country had been held rather than governed by the English, the garrisons of the strong castles exerting a lawless tyranny over their immediate neighbours, while in every fertile valley, where the mailed horsemen of the English barons could ride, castles of stone had been erected, and the English manorial system had been introduced. But among the hills the Welsh tribesmen still held their lands by the innate right of freemen, although their hereditary chiefs were doing their best to convert their tribal superiority into the hard cash of annual rents. With all this, life was insecure, and the laws practically left to administer themselves. The local judges were often threatened by the relatives of those they condemned, and sometimes fell victims to their wild vengeance, and feuds and quarrels between village and village were often obstinate and cruel. The final resort was to the courts of the Lords Marchers, whose rude and partial judgments recalled to the Welsh bitter memories of conquest and subjection.

To flatter the national pride Henry established at Ludlow a kind of viceregal court, which was intended to manage the affairs of Wales itself and the four border counties. The king had named his eldest boy Arthur, in acknowledgment of his Welsh lineage; not that the name is popular among the Welsh, who, it is said, knew nothing about Arthur, and his table round, till they became acquainted with mediæval romance and tradition from the Continent. Owen would have had a much more familiar ring about it, but then the English people might not have relished a King

Owen. Anyhow, the boy-prince Arthur was sent to Ludlow, and Arthur's court was for a while established among the hills. And hither came Katharine, the Spanish princess, to be married to young Arthur.

After the untimely death of Prince Arthur, the viceregal court was still kept up, under the guardianship of Lords President; and in the reign of Henry the Eighth a sweeping change was made, abolishing local jurisdictions in Wales, and bringing the country under the influence of English laws and of judges appointed by the king. Thus the post of Lord President became one of some dignity and importance. Sir Henry Sidney, the father of the more celebrated Philip, was one of the most noted of these presidents; and when he held his mimic court at Ludlow, his son went to and fro between there and Shrewsbury grammar-school, where he was being educated.

Under Sir Henry Sidney, or, at all events, at some time in Elizabeth's reign, the castle was much altered and enlarged to suit the requirements of domestic life. Windows were pierced in the outer walls, and light and warmth let into the gloomy old feudal fortress; the hall of the castle was altered and enlarged, and became the scene of pageants and festivals, where the reigning Lord President entertained the neighbouring chiefs and men of dignity.

Hither in the reign of Charles the First came John Egerton, Earl of Bridgewater,

A noble peer of mickle trust and power,

who, leaving the then gay and splendid court of Whitehall, where pageants, music, and masques were all the rage, sought in his mimic court to introduce some of the lively spirit of the age. The Earl's councillor in this and his master of the revels was Henry Lawes, "one of His Majesty's private Musick," and the friend of young John Milton:

Harry, whose tuneful and well-measured song
First taught our English music how to span
Words with just note and accent.

To produce something new and original at the inauguration of his patron was the ambition of Henry Lawes, and he applied to Milton to write the words of a masque, which he, Lawes, should set to music. The Masque of Comus was the result, which with Miltonic dignity recites its first cause in the appointment of the mickle-peer

With tempered awe to guide
An old and haughty nation, proud in arms.

We may well believe that the central motive of the piece was furnished by an actual incident. Local tradition points to the neighbouring forest as the scene, where the Earl's two young sons and their fair young sister, Lady Alice Egerton, were lost and benighted on their way

To attend their father's state
And new-intrusted sceptre. . . .

And these young people were the first performers of *Comus*—Milton's first and last essay to tune his muse to courtly measures. From this time, indeed, Milton turned his mind to the great controversies now pending, and the Earl of Bridgewater lived to record his opinion of his once court poet—that he was a pestilent fellow, worthy of being hanged on the gallows'-tree.

But the original "Lady" in *Comus*, the sweet Alice Egerton, had more to do with Ludlow. Years after the adventure in the woods, and the performance of the masque, Lady Alice married an elderly peer, Lord Carbery, and after the Restoration he was made Lord President, and his wife came to rule the viceregal court at Ludlow Castle. And here, under her sway, Samuel Butler, the author of *Hudibras*, whose chamber over a gateway is pointed out by tradition, held some small official post in his patron's household. But for long before Lady Alice's marriage, she had lived with her father—and a good deal at his town mansion in the Barbican—and she must have known the "ingenious Mr. Milton" very well by sight, though, probably, they never exchanged a word together. But no doubt she had *Comus* in her library, the original anonymous edition, published at the sign of the Three Pigeons in Paul's Churchyard, which you may now hunt for in the Museum catalogue from Milton to *Comus*, and from *Comus* to Ludlow, to find it at last reposing in the large room as a show volume, with its title-page, "A Maske presented at Ludlow Castle on Michaelmasse night, before the . . . Lord Praesident of Wales." A touch of Milton's latinity here. An ordinary man would have written "president."

Ludlow and its castle went on in viceregal form, with its provincial court and provincial courtiers, its hangers-on, and faded old pensioners, the form surviving, but the life all gone out of it, till the beginning of the eighteenth century, when the Presidentship was abolished. But long after there remained rags and tatters of the old state and dignity—faded old hangings,

broken furniture—and the habitable parts of the castle but slowly going to decay; the grand old keep of Norman build still rising proudly above the ruins of flimsier modern buildings. And thus there is a continuity about the life of Ludlow Castle that gives it especial interest, as it seems to connect us, with but few missing links, with the first beginnings of our national life. And with this we take our leave of Salop, and cross the border to Herefordshire.

IF !

If I could pass as swiftly as a thought
The leagues that lie between us two to-night:
And come beside you in the lamp's clear light,
As weary with the work the hours have brought,
You rest beside the hearth; if I could stand
And lean on the broad elbow of your chair,
And pass my finger through the clustering hair,
And take into my own the tired hand,
And whisper very softly in your ear,
Some phrase to us, and to us only known;
And take my place as if it were my own
For ever—would you bid me welcome, dear?

TRAVELS IN THE EAST.

PART VIII.

"WHAT I want is, Facts!" cried the worthy and enlightened Mr. Gradgrind, in *Hard Times*.

I hope that I can claim no close resemblance to that gentleman; but I own it was a want precisely similar to his, which led me first to start upon my Eastern travels. I wished to see with my own eyes some of the homes of the poor workers, who are living there remote from the fine folk of the West. I wanted to inspect the actual condition of these much-talked-of abodes, and see if they were overcrowded, or falling to decay; and if any of the dwellers were half stifled or half starved. I wished to gain some knowledge of the ways and means of living of these poor working-people; and to hear from their own lips what complaints they had to make about their labour and their life.

If the reader chance to share my appetite for facts, he may thoroughly rely on the reality of those which I have introduced. Devourers of light literature may find diet of this sort too substantial for their taste; and I have tried therefore to mix a little fancy with my facts, by way of flavouring the dish. But my fancies have been based on solid fact; as a good deal of light cookery is founded upon flesh. Some of the facts I have had to handle were unpalatably dry; and some not wholly savoury; and some, perhaps, a trifle coarse.

Indeed, there seemed but little hope of their being at all relished, unless they could be served with just an appetising sprinkle—I dare not say, of Attic salt, but I may, perhaps, describe it as some literary sauce.

The scenes I have tried to picture have been really faithful drawings, done in pen and ink, and enlarged from the rough sketches I had pencilled on the spot. I have not wished to paint things blacker than they looked, nor have I clapped on lots of colour to heighten the effect.

But the reader must remember, while he joins me in my travels, that the dwellings I describe are not the dens where thieves live, or the haunts of wretched vice. Slums they may be, some of them, and foul, and ill-built, and ill-cleansed, and crowded overmuch for either decency or health, and going rapidly to ruin for mere want of due repair. Still, they are the so-called decent dwellings of the hard-worked honest poor, who have the happiness to live in this free and happy land.

A Royal Commission is now sitting on the subject, and collecting evidence from witnesses, presumably most competent to give it, and to aid with their experience towards amendment of the evils which undoubtedly exist. Whether or not these noble people may really lend a helping hand in better housing of King Mob, is more than can be prophesied. Let us hope that they may at any rate assist in the not distant dethronement of King Job, who has far too long reigned paramount in many a vestry parliament, and swayed his baleful sceptre over many a Poor Law Board.

Having thus relieved my mind, I may proceed with a light step upon my last travels in the East.

The sun was brightly shining when I met my guide at noon; and in the gardens of the West I left the lilacs large in bud, and the pear-trees near to bloom. The elms and chestnuts here and there were actually green; and in their boughs the birds were twittering. Here in the East, however, such spring's delights as these were not to be discerned. Hardly a tree was visible; and scarce even a sparrow, while basking in the sunshine, was blithe enough to chirp. Indeed, the sunshine seemed to deepen the shadows of the scenery, to search out its defects, and to show them up in prominence with a shaming, scorching light.

The ways by which we went through the wilds of brick and mortar were similar to those which we had previously traversed. There was little to relieve their dreary, dull monotony. All the streets were straight and narrow; some indeed so narrow that two carts could hardly pass. All were thronged with ragged children, making believe to play, and having rarely anything to play with, except perhaps a sickly baby, or a broken hoop. All were bounded on each side by a dingy, low-roofed row of dirty yellow houses, with not one single inch of ornament, and conspicuously mean in their cheap and ugly make. There were few shops to be seen, and these made no outward show; and even the small beer shops, which seemed to be abundant, had few loungers at their doors.

The children seemed to have the streets all to themselves, for scarce a man was to be met, and only here and there a woman, either carrying a baby, or else hurrying along as though hastening to her work. Here and there a cat was crouching in a doorway, or creeping along furtively in quest of some stray food. Now and then a cock gave a melancholy crow, and was answered in the distance by a still more dismal rival. The shrill whistle of a railway resounded now and then; but that is not the kind of whistle which betokens a light heart.

While on our way through this sad wilderness we had some chat with one of the few men whom we met. He was standing in his doorway, which his large figure well-nigh filled, and he returned with interest the greeting of my guide, in whom he seemed to recognise a friend in case of urgent need. A group of tiny, ragged, dirty little children were gathered near the gutter, and were performing a small war-dance round two babies who seemed twins, and who were sitting bolt upright, and with eyes wide open, in a broken-down perambulator wherein they were close packed. "They're as numerous as flies," the man solemnly remarked; and indeed the simile was not an ill-chosen one; for the cluster of small creatures seemed perpetually in motion, and making an incessant disturbance for no adequate result. I counted five-and-twenty in a space of six yards square, and there were other groups and scattered units in the passage, for it was not quite a street.

This man said that he had been living

"there or thereabouts for nigh on thirty year," and had rarely found life harder than he was doing now. Yes, he worked down at the docks, he did, and he'd most all'ys had been workin' there since he came 'ome from furrin parts. But three days out o' five there weren't no work as he could get, and they didn't seem to keer about keepin' their old 'ands neither. And fresh comers they flocked in so, why you was forced a'most to fight for every bit of a job you got.

As he appeared an old inhabitant, I enquired whether he noticed any improvement in the neighbourhood in the time during which he had been living in it.

"Well, yes," he answered gravely, after much inward meditation. "'Taint so bad now as it were. Leastways, the outside of it. This 'ere place weren't safe to henter scarcely; leastways, arter nightfall, when as I fust came to live 'ere. An' nobody dustn't go much, not even by daylight, mind you, down there by the Blood 'Olea."

The Blood Holes! A rare name this, methought, for a death-scene in a melodrama. And the deep voice of the man seemed to make it sound more murderous. Still, we passed in safety through the sanguinary outlet from the passage where we left him, and by way of pleasant contrast, so far at least as the name went, we soon entered a Place which bore the title of Victoria, though there was little in its aspect to denote a royal residence.

There was a big dust-bin on the right hand of the place, put by way of useful ornament to decorate the entrance. Although not above half full (it being early in the week, that fine Monday afternoon), the dust-heap signified its presence quite as plainly to the nose, as by the eyes it was perceptible. That the dwellers in the court were not very exact marksmen in the shooting of their rubbish, and cared little for its presence, was patent from the way in which a peck or two of it lay scattered on the pavement, and added to the perfume of the ornamental reservoir.

The place contained ten houses, five on either side, and each of one small storey. Every house contained four rooms, and every room was probably the home of a whole family. With an average of less than four to each abode—or apartment if you please—the number of dwellers in the

court, which was some twenty yards in length, would exceed one hundred and fifty. How often the dust-bin, that was common to them all, was cleaned out in the week, appeared a point which should be seen to, especially in summer, by the sanitary inspector.

The home which we there entered was the smallest I had seen, and, except perhaps the dustman's, it was certainly the dirtiest. Roughly guessed, its measurement was about eight feet by six, and not more than seven in height, and there was hardly a clean square inch in either floor, or walls, or ceiling. "Some walls won't take no paint," explained the mistress of the mansion, a plain, unwashed young woman, very slovenly in dress, and wearing one eye closed, clearly not by nature. The walls had once been partly blue, but now were chiefly black and brown with the dirt that had encrusted them. They were, however, much concealed by a collection of cheap prints, some coloured and some plain, and, viewed as works of art, entirely without value. In their subject, some were sacred and many more were secular, and of these latter, some were sporting and others sentimental. I counted seventeen of these exquisite productions. The one which occupied the place of honour on the walls displayed a rather long and lackadaisical young lady reclining on a sofa in a sadly languid posture, while a bevy of small persons, with their hair neatly curled, but with very scanty clothing, were floating in a sort of rainbow overhead. This delightful scene was labelled "The Believer's Vision," and, its gilded frame included, could hardly have been purchased for less than eighteenpence.

The works of art excepted, there was little in the room of either ornament or use, barring an old bedstead with a heap of huddled sacking, whereon was a lean kitten of rather a sad look. She seemed ashamed of being seen in a place of such untidiness, and was pursuing under difficulties the labour of a wash. Some cheap and dirty crockery was scattered on a shelf, and prominent on the mantelpiece was a group whose date of birth it was easy to determine at a leash of decades since. It showed the Queen in a red robe, with a gilt crown on her head, and a scarlet pair of cheeks. She was standing quite erect, between a dapper little Frenchman and a lesser fez-capped Turk. As a sign of her supremacy, she overtopped her brave allies by more than half a head in stature,

this being in their measurement as much as half an inch.

"Me an' my 'usbin an' the child the three of us we sleeps in this 'ere little room," cried the young woman in a breath, and then added in another: "But we've a littler room be'ind you know which we 'ires it all hincluded in the three-an'-six a week."

Proceeding to this smaller room, we found her statement of its size to be literally true. It hardly could have measured more than five feet, say, by six. Two panes of glass were broken in the window, but still the tiny chamber had a close and stuffy smell. A limp and dirty pillow, and a little pile of sacking, lay crammed into a corner; and, except a broken chair, there was no other furniture to hide the filthy floor.

"Mother an' the little girl sleeps here," continued she, and introduced us to the lady, who looked vastly like her daughter, in so far as both their faces sadly needed soap. Mother was employed in sewing a large sack. It measured five feet long, and was meant to hold four bushels, so the worker said. She had to sew both sides, and to hem all round the top. The pay was sixpence for thirteen of them, and she could do "two turns," that was twice thirteen, a day. Yes, it were stiffish work, she owned, and it hurt your hands a bit, leastways till they got 'ardened like. But she was glad enough to get it, for work was precious slack.

Mother further stated that her age was "fifty-two, come August," and that her daughter, with the closed eye, was the only one alive out of her seven children, and that the little girl who slept with her was not one of her family, nor in any way related to her. "Mother keeps 'er 'cos she's a Norphun," explained the daughter simply; as though that were a sufficient reason for the housing of the little stranger, who, she said, was then at school.

While this dialogue proceeded, another dirty-faced young woman, with her hair unkempt and tangled, entered the small room, and her tongue soon began to wag as rapidly as the daughter's, who seldom let her mother have a chance of saying much. The new comer brought a big sheet, which she had begun to sew. As the work demanded special attention to the stitches, no less than twopence would be earned when it was done. No, it wasn't a quick way to make a fortune, she confessed; but it was better than making hammocks.

Besides sewing fifty holes, you had to stitch two double seams; and half-a-score of hammocks only brought you four and threepence, and you had to work hard to do a score a week. Still, this was not so bad as making labels for the post-bags; for you got half-a-crown a hundred, and it took you all your time to do a hundred in a week. The matchbox trade, however, was by general consent esteemed the worst of all, and my young friend Little Mother was considered very lucky to get as much as threepence for filling fifty boxes, that being more than double the current market price.

Close outside the broken window, in a desolate back yard, there stood a little barefooted boy of four or five, wearing, to mark his nationality—it was St. Patrick's Day—a green bow at his breast. He had blue eyes and brown hair, a ragged pair of trousers, and a pinkish pair of cheeks. Their roses had been washed, just washed, in a shower, or in some soap-and-water, which, if less poetical, perhaps had cleaned them even better, and made him a marked contrast to the ladies of the court.* As a reason for his standing there, they explained that he was "playing," though certainly the fact was not apparent from his attitude, and he had nothing to play with, and nobody to play with him.

Beckoned to approach, he entered very promptly, with a smile on his clean face, and being presented with a penny, and asked what he would do with it, he replied very promptly, "Give it to mother," and departed so to do.

Mother appearing shortly after, I enquired if Master Timothy had performed his promise, and she replied, "Yes, shure," and said he was a good boy, and never broke his word. She was cleanly in her dress, and grave in her demeanour; and indeed her gravity was not without good cause. Her husband had died suddenly when Tim was a year old, and she was left with seven children to bring up. "Shure, they're mostly livin' out now, and a doin' for theirselves, they are; and beside me-self and Tim here, there's but three of 'em to slape upon the flure wid us upstairs now."

"Do you ever see a clergyman, or a district visitor?" I enquired of the four women, who now were gathered round me, and who, though living in one house, were

* Perhaps it is worth mention that in all my travels I only saw one hand-basin.

inhabitants, in fact, of three distinct abodes. I had more than once put the question in my travels, and had been invariably answered in the negative; whereat I had not greatly wondered, being mindful of the miles and miles of misery around me, and the amazing multitude of dwellings to be visited, and the utter incapacity of the Church as now existent to cope with such vast work. However, here at last the query elicited assent—at least from two of the quartette.

"My clergyman comes to visit me," said the wife with the closed eye; and she spoke a little proudly, and emphasised the pronoun as though she kept a special parson solely for her private use. "And he's a priest," she added smartly, as if to heighten her importance in having the exclusive advantage of his visits. But her mother, with a pinch of snuff, appeared to sniff at such presumption, and cried: "Sure, he'll come to any one of us; but why should we be troublin' him, exceptin' when we're dead?" Whereat the sheetmaker, by a nod, appeared to signify assent, and the grave widow said, "That's true enough," and seemed to look more grave.

At the close of this conversation we left these poor women with a murmur of apology for taking up their time, which, however, they protested we had not done in the least. The street through which we went, on our departure from the court, looked sadly foul by sunlight, though my guide said that at night it was really like a fair. There were still a few signs visible of its nocturnal aspect. Locomotive shops were ranged along the pavement, and the hoarse cries of their keepers to attract a passing customer resounded in the air. Many houses in the neighbourhood had lately been pulled down as being too bad to be lived in, and there were many others which might fitly share their fate.

Five minutes of fast walking—as fast, at least, as we could go without trampling on the children, who anywhere and everywhere sat, or sprawled, or scrambled, or scampered in our way—another couple of furlongs, say, brought us well within sight of some shipping, and we soon found ourselves at the end of a canal. As I was travelling in the East, I might have mistaken it for the Canal of Suez, let us say, had not my guide informed me it was named after the Regent of imperishable fame. Near to this, and near the river, which lay hidden from our view by some acres of tall brick-work and some forests of tall masts (bricks

and masts both helping to make up what so often in my travels had been mentioned as the Docks), here suddenly I found myself in a somewhat famous thoroughfare, which by dwellers in the East is known simply as "The 'Ighway," but to which the name of Ratcliff is added as a prefix by strangers in the West.

Sailors abounded here: some yellow-faced, some black, and many brown and sunburnt. Of course, where Jack Tars do abound, their Jills are sure to congregate, and so the crowded pavements were full of fair pedestrians, having nothing on their heads, and doubtless not much in them, except vanity or viciousness. Seen by daylight these fair sirens appeared gifted with few charms that could render them alluring. Nor seemed there much attraction in the caves to which at nightfall they commonly resort. These were shabby-looking haunts, though bearing signs of festive import, such as The Jolly Tar, or The Jovial Sea Captain. Jack's alive till midnight in these vicious drink-and-dancing shops, and if he filled his pockets ere he started on the spree, he will empty them long ere the cruise ashore is ended.

Not far from the Highway, and too close to escape from its contaminating influence, we discovered a small court, which, by way of dismal augury, bore the dreary name of Chancery. We further were informed that it lay near to Angel Gardens, a name which very likely had been chosen for a contrast. Here in a low room of less than twelve feet square, whereof the staircase formed a part, we found three women, a red baby, and a little sleeping girl. The floor was bare and dirty, and the ceiling nearly black. Both sadly needed mending, as did likewise the window and the walls. The eldest woman said the weekly rent was now four shillings for the house, which only held two rooms, and looked scarce strongly built enough to hold so much as that.

She was a widow with eight children, of whom the sleeping girl was one. The younger mother with the baby, who was just a fortnight old, had given birth to three, and the still younger woman, who was stitching at a sack, looked likely before long to increase the yearly rising population of the court.

Near this dirty Court of Chancery, I made my first appearance in a common lodging-house. Really, by comparison, it looked quite a cleanly, comfortable place.

"Everything as heart could wish for as regards cleanliness, it is here," exclaimed, with a proud emphasis, the grey-bearded old guardian, who smacked somewhat of the sea, and the strict discipline of ships. He informed us that permission to slumber in his paradise was granted upon payment of fourpence for a night. There were about fifty beds within his care; not very long nor large they were, but "quite as big as you could hope to get for fourpence," he remarked. Each had a brown coverlet, and looked neat and tidy, and clearly the bare floor had been most scrupulously scrubbed. "You see, it's a compulsory affair," he observed with a smile, and a sharp staccato nod, which was as expressive as a wink. "Police inspectuses us, you know. Drops in of a sudden, and are down on us like a shot. So if we've a mind to be grubby, we must get our grub elsewhere."

He smiles rather grimly as he makes his little joke, and smiles with still more grimness when I question him concerning the habits of the gentlemen who come to his hotel. "Ah, they're a queerish sort o' customers. Queer characters they are, some of them. Leastways, them as drop in casual like. 'Cause we've a many as come reg'lar, an' keep to their own beds. No, they don't bring not much luggage. They've just got the clothes they're wearing, and if they've extry in a bundle, they pops 'em down hunder the bolster. Nor they don't hand me over many walables to keep for 'em. If so be they've got a gold watch, or a set o' di'mond studs, as they're per-tickler proud o' wearing, perhaps afore they come they asks their Huncle to take keer of 'em."

Briefly, with few details, I must summarise my final six hours' journey in the East. I saw a score of families in this short space of time, and heard everywhere the same complaining: of high rent for wretched house-room, and of low wages for hard work. Here I found a widow, who contrived with an old mangle to earn a scanty living for herself and her two children; one, a boy of eighteen, having been born blind. There I came across a labourer who had spent a fruitless morning in waiting at the docks. "I was there at half-past five," he said, "but there was no job to be had. I hadn't nought for breakfast but just a little bite o' bread; an' if it warn't for a bit o' baccy as I got from an old friend, I should ha' fell down in a faint." His face was pale, but cleanly

shaved; and his boots were nicely blacked. His wife, too, was as neat as her poor means would suffer. They had four boys to clothe, and two of them to feed, and all four slept with them in one tiny little room.

Near them we found a costermonger, who, unlike most of his trade, had a clean; rosy pair of cheeks. He had been selling mackerel since daylight, so he said, and had been doing "pretty middling," he candidly confessed. He was sitting at his tea, having a score still to be sold ere he ended his day's work. His wife had blessed him with ten children, of whom the first born was a soldier, on service now in India, and the last born was a baby, who was taking some refreshment from the maternal breast. Seven of them slept, together with their parents, in a couple of small rooms, one hardly seven feet square. The sleepers in the back room had their beds, that is, their old sacks, laid upon empty fish-boxes, as the ground was rather damp.

Then we visited a widow, neat and cleanly like her child, who "never saw his father," she pityingly remarked. Her four children all slept with her in one little bed, which was as tidy as the room which made their little home, and measured barely nine feet long by not quite seven in breadth. "I haven't had a bit of dinner, nor tea neither, these two days," she replied to a question; and added simply, "It feels grievous to have the children, and not know how to feed them;" this being said, not in a begging way, but as stating a sad fact.

We likewise spent ten minutes with the wife of a dock labourer, who "drank dreadful" once, and then was "all'ys rowing" her; but who, thanks to my guide's good mission-work, had happily reformed. She had had ten children, whereof the first had died of "cholery," and only four were now alive. The two big lads slept in the small bed, "and the little 'uns in t'other 'un with me and my good man." He had hardly had a full day's work for the last fortnight. Sometimes he'd get a job "as would last him night and day," and then he would perforce "go two days idle, and p'raps more. And that takes the beauty off of it," she figuratively remarked.

Also we went into a cellar, which, some while since, was famous; a poor woman who had lived there, having died of sheer starvation, after bringing into life a

miserable babe. The place was ten feet square, and exactly six feet in height. It contained a biggish bed, wherein slept father and mother, while Jane and Charley somehow lay crosswise at the foot. In a small bed by the window slept a big lad of fifteen; while the eldest girl, who owned that she was "going on for twenty," slumbered somehow in a corner, with a child of "not quite three," and a sister "turned sixteen."

In the back yard, which seemed common to the row of meagre tenements wherein this cellar had a place, I observed two little figures who recalled to me the pair of wretched, abject children who were introduced by the Ghost of Christmas Present to Mr. Scrooge by the names of "Ignorance" and "Want." Stunted and half starved, uncared for and unkempt; with one scanty bit of sackcloth to serve in lieu of clothing; with pale though filthy faces, and bare legs reddened with rough usage, and well-nigh black with dirt; they stared at me half savagely, and then scampered to some hiding-place like two small, scared, wild beasts. Poor wretched little creatures! Who could be their keeper? They were the saddest specimens of civilised existence I had met with in the East; and as I went upon my way—for I could find no entrance to the hole where they were hid—I reflected that the School Board would find fit work to do with pupils like to these. Moreover, I reflected that if living human creatures were constrained to stay in styes, it scarce needed Circe's art to turn them into brutes.

Last of all we visited a weakly, hollow-eyed, poor woman, who sat shivering by a fire, with a lean baby in her lap. She had six other children, one of whom was dumb, and was sitting opposite. Rheumatic-fever had prostrated her for several months, she said; and, but for my guide's help, she thought she must have died. Her husband, a dock labourer, had been near dying too. "It was the wet clothes, and waiting in the damp, as floored him," she opined. Well, yes, she would own that he had once been given to drink a bit; but "he's reg'lar cured of that," she said with a wan smile, and a flutter of her faint voice. He had long since signed the pledge, and had never once relapsed into his old vice, thanks mainly to my guide and the mission-folk who worked with him. "He's a different man now," the poor woman continued, "and I'm thankful, that I am, to them as made him give up drink."

And now I bid farewell to the poor

people of the East, among whom I have recently been travelling a little, and with whom I have certainly been talking not a little, when I found them so inclined. If any word of mine may serve to help them in their ways, or in their work, or in their want, my travel and my travail will not have been in vain. Of my guide I will say simply, that his presence was welcomed wherever we walked, and that I thoroughly believe he is doing much good work.

BLACK LABOUR IN QUEENSLAND.

QUEENSLAND is a vast province of Australia, occupying the entire north-eastern area of that great island-continent. A large proportion of its territory lies within the tropics, and on the eastern coast-face of the tropical section extensive sugar-plantations are cultivated. It is exclusively in the tillage of these—in the words of an Act of Parliament, in "tropical or semi-tropical agriculture" only—that coloured labour is utilised. The work is too arduous for the white man, in the moist, relaxing heat of the low coast country. The alternatives are to refrain from sugar-growing altogether, or to employ in that culture labour other than European.

Cingalese and Chinamen have been tried. The former are worthless, the latter are too costly, and, besides, are no better liked in Queensland than on the Pacific slope. It is from the Polynesian Islands, which stud the South Pacific Ocean, that the Queensland planters almost exclusively derive their supply of labour.

The natives of these islands live in a state of savagery. At home, labour seems foreign to their nature; brought to Queensland, it is found that they become with singular facility industrious and willing workers, with a great aptitude for a certain restricted amount of civilisation. They very quickly pick up a smattering of English, and it is astonishing how soon they learn the rudiments of a trade. They are as imitative as Chinamen.

The Queensland planters send schooners to coast about among the islands and recruit labour. It must be said that occasionally charges of kidnapping are brought against skippers of "labour schooners." When in Queensland last year I investigated this kidnapping question with great assiduity, prepared to believe that abuses were perpetrated. I had not gone far into the enquiry when I became convinced that it

would be a real benefit to the Polynesian islanders were they kidnapped en masse, and carried off to Queensland, there to be educated out of the savagery which now degrades them, and be indoctrinated into habits of industry that should modify the tenor of their lives when restored to their island homes. As it is, this process is slowly going on through the instrumentality of "recruits," who go home after a term of service in Queensland. These are the chief agents in procuring for the planters fresh supplies of recruits. Often they come back themselves for a second and even a third term, and they bring with them a squad of friends and relatives, who have been influenced by their good report.

No doubt the skipper of a labour-schooner takes steps to gain the favour of an island community, with intent to procure recruits. The recruiting-boat has its lockers full of tobacco, beads, and axes as presents to chiefs, and as contributions towards the establishment of friendly relations. A "boy"—all the male recruits are called "boys"—may be willing to take service, but his family may be loth to let him go. Is there any great crime in the removal of their reluctance by the distribution of a few presents?

The Queensland Government has sedulously striven to prevent the possibility of abuses in the work of recruiting. No labour-schooner can start on a voyage without a licence, given only after official inspection of the most searching character, and on its master having entered into a bond for two thousand five hundred dollars that he will refrain from kidnapping and other malpractices, and obey the Act of Parliament to the letter. As a check on him, and further to guard against abuses, the Government puts on board every schooner an official as their representative. His boat accompanies the recruiting-boat on every expedition it makes to the shore, so that he may be in a position to watch that no recruit is carried off against his will. When each recruit comes on board, before his engagement is ratified, the Government agent has to explain to him categorically the conditions and advantages of the service he proposes to enter; and if these do not satisfy him, it is the duty of that official to see that he is allowed to go on shore again. Once the engagement made, the compact entered into, the recruit is of course no longer free to rescind the bargain, as seems but reasonable.

Into all the details of the safeguards against kidnapping with which the Queensland Government has fenced around this recruiting service, it would be tedious to enter. Suffice it to say that with the cross-guards of Government agents on board every ship, clothed with the fullest powers; of an immigration-agent at every port, charged to investigate every whisper of accusation; with a leaven in every ship-load of boys who have already served an engagement in Queensland, can speak English, and are quite fearlessly outspoken; it is difficult to imagine how abuses can be perpetrated, and yet more so how, if perpetrated, they could escape detection and punishment. Two schooners with cargoes of recruits arrived at Maryborough during my stay in that Queensland town, and I boarded both. It would be impossible to speak too highly of the condition which those vessels presented. White emigrants might well envy the accommodation afforded. Well cared for in all respects, the passengers—I know not how else to call them—were as cheerful a set of fellows as one could wish to see. If there was a kidnapped man among them, all I can say is, that in Polynesian Islands dissimulation must have become a fine art.

I fancy the Polynesian is naturally a cheerful, bright sort of fellow. If he be not so at home, he soon takes on this complexion when he comes to Queensland. When you look at him, he grins responsively; when you speak to him, he smiles all over his head. He is a likeable fellow, and has an instinctive politeness and cordiality. He will run of his own accord to open a gate for you, or to hold a horse. He seems a willing workman, and he does his work at once with a light heart and a manifest interest in it. His employers unanimously accord him a good name. He gives little trouble, they testify; he needs no assiduous watching to keep him from idling, nor stimulation to keep him lively in his task. He is an independent fellow in his way—he is a man, and will have his rights as a man; but let him have them, and treat him frankly and fairly, and there is nothing about him of what the Americans expressively call "cussedness." There is a good deal of the feudal spirit in him. He becomes attached to his master, if the latter is a good, considerate master with a kind word for his henchman and a regard for his welfare. After he has gone back to his island from an engagement, he very often returns to a second on the same

plantation ; and when friends meet on the quiet, idle Sundays, I was assured their gossip is mostly as to the relative advantage of their respective plantations, and that great is the vaunting of the fellows hailing from those which have an established repute for exceptionally good treatment. But it is not easy to see how anywhere there can be bad treatment. The Kanaka—that is the generic name for the Polynesian islander—knows his rights to a tittle, and everyday experience shows that he is not the man to have any reluctance in complaining to the local official “protector,” if he considers himself wronged. Putting every other check against ill-treatment on one side, the argument of self-interest must be paramount with the employer against doing despite to his Kanaka. The Kanaka has cost the employer over twenty pounds to bring him from his island to the plantation, and his term of engagement is only for three years ; if he is ill he costs the planter in hospital charges and medical attendance ; and his wages, which are at the rate of six pounds a year, paid half yearly, run on just the same as if he were in good health and doing his day’s work. He is too costly a commodity to be trashed away by any ill-usage or neglect. But, as slave-owning experience proved in the United States, there are men so constituted as to be capable of this kind of false economy, if left to their own devices ; and so the law of Queensland intervenes with the most detailed and stringent enactments for the Kanaka’s welfare, and locates an independent and strenuous local functionary in each sugar-district to take care that those enactments are complied with to the letter. The Kanaka in Queensland fares infinitely better than the farm-labourer in England. These are his daily rations : one pound and a half of bread or flour, one pound of beef or mutton, five ounces of sugar, half an ounce of tea, three pounds of potatoes. Per week : one ounce and a half of tobacco, two ounces of salt, four ounces of soap. Compare this plentifulness with the oatmeal diet of the Scottish peasant, Pat’s *toujours* potatoes, honest Giles’s scrap of rusty bacon or hunk of cheese ! Contrast it with the stern simplicity of the British soldier’s ration : three-quarters of a pound of meat (with bone), and one pound of bread ! I have seen the day when I would have been thankful to have had a Queensland Kanaka as a chum, for the sake of his surplus rations after he had eaten and was filled. Our

Polynesian friend, accustomed at home to dress strictly in the fashion set by our first parents before the fall, finds himself the possessor of an adequate wardrobe defined by law, and supplied and maintained by the planter. He is comfortably housed and supplied with bedding ; his rations are cooked for him ; he has what firewood he needs ; when he is sick he is sent into hospital, and a doctor, whom the planter pays, attends him. Should he die, his master has to pay his wages up till the day of his death into the hands of the Government official.

It is that functionary’s business—he is called “protector,” or “inspector,” indifferently—to use every effort, by keeping his ears open for reports, by listening to complaints from the plantation hands, and by frequent personal visits among the plantations in his district, to put in force, to its minutest details, an Act which seems to leave no loophole for abuse. He is authorised to employ a lawyer to prosecute for offences against Kanakas, and to defend Kanakas in cases where there is a doubt of their being in the wrong. He can bring to bear a great leverage of influence in regard to cases which he may not consider strong enough to take into court. For example, during the twelve months the Maryborough protector had been in office, he had procured the discharge of three overseers who he had convinced himself were guilty of petty tyranny. This the boys revolt against with the utmost keenness. They are willing enough, but they will not be driven. A hasty blow struck by an overseer brings an immediate complaint to the protector. One can readily discern the tone and spirit of good-humoured independence among the Kanakas. They have the port of manhood. They look you square in the face, but with no suggestion of impertinence. They have the air of men who, like the Jock Elliot of the Border ballad, will “tak’ dunts frae naebody,” and they don’t, except occasionally from one another. During non-working hours they are free to do as they list, to go where they please. They have the Saturday half-holiday, when they delight to stroll into town. Sunday is their day for fulfilling social duties, doing a little sporting as they travel. The Polynesian gentleman starts on a visit to a friend of his own island in some neighbouring plantation, with bow and arrow in hand, and enlivens the road by letting fly, with no particular effect, at such birds as he can

stalk up to. The country roads and bush-tracks are alive all Sunday with knots of cheery heathens having a good time after their own fashion. The law averts from them the curse of alcohol. The publican detected in selling liquor to a Kanaka forfeits his licence for life, and the tavern in which the offence is committed is summarily and permanently cut off from the list of public-houses. The protector encourages the islanders in putting their wages by in the savings-bank, and will show you a cupboardful of their pass-books. When his engagement expires, the cost of the Kanaka's voyage home is defrayed by his master under Government surveillance. On the whole I do not believe that any servants can be better cared for by their masters, and more sedulously and stringently protected and fostered by legislation and its enforcement, than are the Polynesian islanders at work on the sugar-plantations of Queensland.

GERALD.

BY ELEANOR C. PRICE.

CHAPTER V. HUGH.

As Theo walked away with her cousin, the shadow of her grandmother's presence, the echo of her mischievous words, became fainter every moment. It had been a piece of unkindness, of malice, mixed with jealousy, that attempt to destroy her peace with Hugh; but fortunately it had failed, and now Theo did not even resent it much. It was only grandmamma! Poor grandmamma could not be good-natured if she tried, and must always say what came into her head, no matter how unhappy it made other people.

Theo was never angry with her long without beginning to be sorry for her. After all, she could not do much harm; and one need only be in Hugh's company for five minutes to realise what utter nonsense she had been talking, and to be ashamed of having minded it or thought about it at all.

Theo was always happy with Hugh. He was never shocked at her flights, and seldom amused at them; but he often expressed a little disapproval, and never any admiration; in fact, he was brotherly, in an unusually polite fashion. He was a strength, a protection, a background of quiet family affection—everything, in short, that Uncle Henry's son ought to have been. Theo had never troubled her-

self to analyse his fondness for her, or hers for him; it was like the air she breathed; she had grown up in it, her mind resting on his in a faith that asked no questions, and expected no enthusiasms. There was only one drawback—that this dear old Hugh was not really her brother; with that one step nearer, Theo would not have known the meaning of loneliness.

As it was, since her uncle's death and Helen's marriage, she had been horribly lonely, and had spent a good many hours thinking sadly of the future. Her grandmother's house could never feel like home, and yet what other home was possible?

She had not seen much of Hugh that summer, for he had been very busy, and Lady Redcliff's reception of him in his one or two visits had not encouraged him to come again. She had wanted very much to talk things over with Hugh, and had said so in a letter two or three days before this Sunday; but now, absurd as Lady Redcliff's remarks and prophecies had been, she felt a faint, foolish disinclination to talk about her own plans. Besides, it was pleasanter and easier to stroll happily along in the sunshine, and think about nothing, and talk to dear Wool, her collie, when they had fetched him from the Mews, where he sadly lived apart from his mistress.

By the time she and Wool had told each other all their feelings, they had reached Kensington Gardens, and he then ran off with a long swinging stride to amuse himself. Captain North, who had only entered into this conversation by refusing to see that Wool's coat was dull, and that he was evidently pining away, now began to talk on his own account.

He had plans, it seemed, and quite clear and definite ones. He was going to Scotland very soon, to shoot with a friend of his, and hoped to be away about six weeks, coming back early in October. He talked of Harry Campbell and his shooting in an animated way, and Theo listened with pleasure, for Hugh had been in very low spirits ever since his father's death.

They sat down under a tree in a quiet corner, and talked for a long time. Wool, when he was tired, came and lay down at Theo's feet. The rustling wind, the warm, soft sun, the touch of autumn sadness already in the air, all was pleasant and peaceful; it made Theo feel good, and her manner was charming. Captain North, sitting beside her there, ought to have been a very happy man: his was the privilege of

having her all to himself, of saying anything he pleased, but he only talked about plans for running away from her.

Yet even as he sat there, he was thinking that perhaps some day Theo would belong to him entirely, and no doubt he would be a very fortunate fellow. He certainly had no intention of marrying anyone else, and he believed that her fancy, too, was perfectly free. He would not say anything now, from an odd mixture of confidence and diffidence.

If Theo had only known it, that last time he came to the square, and was snubbed by Lady Redcliff, and had to retreat rather crestfallen, though he had found time enough alone with Theo to tell her that story of his father's losses—that day, as he walked away from the house, he had made up his mind to rescue Theo from her grandmother, by asking her to marry him as soon as she would; but the day after he had a cheerful little note from Theo, and then he thought that Lady Redcliff could not be positively unkind to her, and that this tremendous step might as well be put off a little. Circumstances were not likely to change; in these days Theo never saw anybody, and there could be no possible doubt of his own constancy to her. Besides, it would be very inconvenient to him to marry that autumn; his affairs were not settled, and he had always intended to leave the army when he married, and this was a step which just now he would be very sorry to take. Perhaps Theo might not have objected to a long engagement; but the plain truth and the conclusion of the whole thing was, though the hero would hardly have confessed it to himself, that he did not dare to ask her. If she refused him, it would be such a horrid business; their happy confidence and friendship at an end for ever.

"Perhaps I had better not," thought the captain, in a miserably wavering state of mind, which would have astonished all his friends; "and yet there is nobody like Theo, and we must settle it some day."

But he made up his mind that, at any rate, there could be no harm in waiting; and in the meanwhile, happily for him, he could meet Theo, and walk with her, and sit beside her, without the slightest quickening of his pulse.

"And now tell me, what are you going to do?" he said presently.

"I don't know. You have made me envious. I wish I was going to shoot in Scotland," said Theo.

"Yes; I wish you were coming with me, but unfortunately there's no Mrs. Campbell. What can we do for you, though, Theo? You are not looking well. I don't think London agrees with you. Would Lady Redcliff let you go away anywhere?"

"I suppose so; she doesn't want me always," said Theo a little sadly.

Captain North looked very grave. He was much interested in balancing a twig on his stick; but he was thinking what a dreadful misfortune his father's death had been for Theo. When Colonel North was alive Theo had had no troubles, no anxieties, she had never been expected to decide or arrange anything for herself. Her uncle had accustomed her to depend entirely on him, and his son thought this was quite right; it seemed to him perfectly correct that a woman should have nothing to do with managing her own affairs. Hugh North liked women, and was liked by them; but he had a very low opinion of their capacity, although this did not interfere with a good deal of old-fashioned chivalry in his thoughts of them.

"You certainly ought not to stay in London," he said presently. "Isn't there anyone by the sea anywhere, or in Wales, or in Scotland, after all? There are the Tom Frasers. That would be a good plan, because we could travel down together."

"My dear Hugh, there may be lots of people all over the kingdom, but none of them have asked me, and I am not going to ask myself. You don't want me to do that, I suppose?"

"No," said Captain North. Then he added after a minute's silence: "How would you like to go to Helen?"

"She has not asked me."

"I thought you told me, some time ago, that she wanted you to go there in the autumn?"

"That was before she was married," said Theo with a slight sigh. "She does not often write to me now."

"Do you write to her? Is it possible that you were a little too scornful about her marriage?"

"Indeed I was not scornful at all," said Theo quickly. "I wish you would not think me so horrid, Hugh. Nell and I were the best of friends, and I said nothing that could hurt her feelings. I liked Mr. Goodall; he seemed very good-tempered. You said yourself that he was not bad, and you thought about him just the same as I did."

"Could you stay in his house?"

Theo looked a little sad.

"It would be Nell's house too," she said, as if reasoning with herself, and then she smiled and looked full at Hugh. "I think it might be amusing," she said, "and she would let me be alone and do anything I liked, and I should learn a great deal about potters and machinery. And don't you think that I might take Aster down, as well as Wool? It would do them both so much good. You won't want Aster while you are in Scotland?"

"No. There would have to be negotiations. Fellows like Goodall are not always accommodating. They have their own groove, and if anything knocks them out of that, you know, they can't always manage themselves. Besides, Helen doesn't ride, and there might be a difficulty about some one to go out with you."

"I could go out alone."

"No, my dear, certainly not. For one thing, a country like that is sure to be full of rough characters. But anyhow I don't approve of it."

"But you should consider, Hugh, that it is necessary for a person like me to be independent. One is not so very young at twenty-three, and I'm sure I feel old enough to go all over the world by myself, only I should not like it. And there's always Combe. What a pity Combe can't ride!"

"A great pity. But don't begin to be independent just yet, to oblige me."

"I am afraid I have begun," said Theo.

"Well, but seriously, I don't see why you should not write to Nell, and propose a visit. Aster and Wool might come in as an afterthought."

Theo was doubtful.

"I must consult grandmamma. I think I will wait a few days, at any rate, she said.

Presently they got up and strolled a little farther, and then she thought it was time to go back to her grandmother, so they turned their steps that way, walking very slowly. Only too soon, however, they reached the square, and Lady Redcliff's door, and then a shadow came over Theo's face again, and it was with a very sad smile that she wished her cousin good-bye.

"Shall I see you again before you go?" she said. "I won't ask you to come in now, because—perhaps you would rather not."

"I'll do anything you like—whatever you think best," said Hugh, with a sort of eagerness that was checked almost before it was visible.

"Perhaps you had better not," said Theo.

He kept her hand in his for a few moments while he said:

"I am afraid this is good-bye, do you know. I am going on Thursday, and I shall be very busy till then. But, Theo, you must not stay here—you are unhappy."

He said the last words very low, with an earnest, lingering gaze into her face.

"I wish I was not obliged to leave you here," he muttered, as she did not answer at once.

"One can't always expect to be happy," said Theo. "You are not happy—we ought not to be, either of us. It is such a very great change. I'm glad you are going to Scotland, and I shall be very glad to see you when you come back again; you will most likely find me here."

"We must write to each other."

"Oh, of course."

"And you won't write to Helen?"

"I am not sure. I shall wait a little. Mr. Goodall might say I was a bore."

"Helen, perhaps, has taught him that word, but he does not know it by nature," said Captain North. "Well, good-bye."

He turned and walked away, and Theo went into the house. They were both sad at parting. She missed his friendly sympathy, and he was haunted by her paleness and thinness, and by the tired look about her beautiful dark eyes.

That evening he took some writing-paper, and sat for a long time with a pen in his hand. I believe he was going to write to Theo, and in quite a new strain; but prudence or some other unattractive virtue once more conquered, and instead of writing to Theo he wrote to his cousin, Mrs. John Goodall, a letter chiefly about Theo, her looks, and her present position with Lady Redcliff.

CHAPTER VI. JOHN.

ANOTHER week of hot, monotonous August passed away, and Theo was still staying with her grandmother. She was not actually discontented; her nature was too fine for small discontents; but yet she was not at all happy. She missed her uncle and all his old friends; she missed Hugh, and Aster, and freedom, and fresh air. She could take long walks now with Combe, and have Wool to run by her side; but she wanted a wide horizon and an active life full of interest, such as she used to live in the old days. Her mental and

bodily health were both being spoilt by the hard strain of this London life without gaiety or excitement. The only changes of every day were those in Lady Redcliff's temper. If she was not angry, and stinging, and malicious, she was silent and dismal. Theo did not know which of these humours was most trying; but she hardly ever complained of her grandmother, even to herself, and they had a strange liking for each other, even when they quarrelled most violently. Yet it was a bad training for the mind and heart of a young woman, and Theo's face showed more and more of the weariness that Captain North had sadly noticed there.

One afternoon, the deadness, the melancholy of this life seemed more intense and painful than ever. The room was hotter and more stuffy. Lady Redcliff had been very cross all day, and was now nodding half asleep over her newspaper. Theo sat dreaming with some fancy-work in her hands, at which she stitched unconsciously, and her lips moved sometimes, for she was repeating to herself the words of a song about fairy-land, which Uncle Henry used to make her sing to him nearly every evening:

And you shall touch with your finger-tips
The ivory gate and golden.

Ah yes; but when and where? Had Uncle Henry only reached it now, when he had gone away into the shadow, and could not be called back again, and could not come and tell her all that he knew she wanted to know? They had often talked about these things, for he was a good man, and Theo from a child had found religion very interesting. The silence after his death had had a sad effect upon her; she could now feel sure of nothing, and though she hated her grandmother's talk of these things, there were dreadful possibilities of truth in it. Theo found it best not to think and puzzle herself too much, but very often to remember and say to herself the words that Uncle Henry used to like best. That song of the fairies—Theo thought that their country was very familiar to him; she fancied that she herself had looked sometimes with him through "the ivory gate and golden," for, certainly, though he had had many troubles, he was the happiest man she had ever known. Ah, but how far away that bright gate seemed now, that entrance into beauty and nobleness, and a high and generous life. A cloud had come down and hidden it; Lady Redcliff's dark walls shut out such visions most effectually. Happiness, too; the joy of life and youth;

it was too soon for these glorious things to "fade into the light of common day," and that fairy gate, to Theo's fancy, had been the way into them all. Was it never to open again?

She was disturbed in her thoughts by the butler, who opened the door gently, with an alarmed glance at his mistress, and asked her if she would see Mr. Goodall.

Before Theo had collected her wits to answer, Lady Redcliff was wide awake.

"Mr. Goodall! Where is he? What does he want?"

She was not a person who had old servants; they could not be faithful to her, any more than her friends, partly because she never trusted them; and this little man, who had been in the house a month, could not yet speak to her without trembling.

"Mr. Goodall asked for Miss Meynell, my lady."

"I know that. Say she is not at home. I can't have that man coming here, Theo. What makes him take such a liberty?"

"He has come to see me, grandmamma," said Theo, rising. "Show Mr. Goodall into the library, Jackson."

The butler hesitated a moment in real alarm; but as Lady Redcliff did not contradict this order, he supposed he was to obey it, and went away.

"This is a sort of odious impertinence that I will not endure," said Lady Redcliff. "My house to be the rendezvous of all the snobs that your cousins choose to connect themselves with! Do you hear, Theo? I won't have it!"

"I really don't know what you mean," said Theo coldly.

"You are so changeable that I really can't understand you," said Lady Redcliff. "You told me yourself that the man was a snob, or how do I know it? And now, because you are bored with me, you are ready to fly into his arms. You will be staying at his house next, I suppose."

"After all, he is Helen's husband," said Theo.

"Does that make any difference? Does a woman raise her husband, pray?"

"I can't argue now. I must go and see him."

"Well, go. I don't want to keep you from your charming new relation."

Theo went slowly downstairs. When she came into the library, where Mr. Goodall was waiting for her, she looked cold, and stately, and sleepy, and absent to the last degree. He, having arrived full of good-nature and friendly feeling, felt

himself suddenly checked in his flow of kindness. Theo certainly looked and spoke as if she did not want him, and at first the good fellow was inclined to be angry; but then he was shocked at her altered looks since the wedding, and remembered all that Helen had said about her dreamy ways, and sensibly and generously determined to make allowances for her.

"I happened to be in London for a day," he said, after answering her questions about Helen, "and my wife thought I might take the opportunity of calling."

"It was very good of you," said Theo.

She was not sure that she liked the way in which those quick, dark eyes of his were scrutinising her. They seemed, somehow, to contradict the rest of his appearance, which was stout, and solid, and opaque. There was an odd kind of smile on his face. Theo thought she liked him less than on the wedding-day, and that it was a little stupid of Helen to send him to see her.

"But she is quite contented with him, I suppose?" she reflected. "Dear me, how very, very funny!"

"How is Lady Redcliff?" said Mr. Goodall. "I did not ask for her, because I understood that she does not care to see people much."

"She is pretty well, thank you. She seldom sees anybody."

"It is better to have a talk with you alone," he said, taking a note out of his pocket-book, "because you can tell me what you think of this plan of ours."

"What plan?" said Theo vaguely, as he gave her the note, which was directed to her in Helen's writing.

"If you will kindly read that, it will save explanation."

"MY DEAREST THEO,—I am sure you must be tired of London by this time, and I know it never agrees with you. I suppose you have not forgotten that you promised to come to me in the autumn, and September begins directly, and I want you now for a really good long visit. This neighbourhood is nothing much, but you and I will have lots to talk about, and you will feel quite independent of the people here, just as I do. I want you to bring Aster and Wool, and to feel as if you were at home, and to stay till something obliges you to go away. This is all from John as well as myself, and his special part is that he will take this letter to you himself, and persuade you to come down with him on

Wednesday. Dear old Theo, don't disappoint me. I want you so very much. —Your loving HELEN."

Theo's face softened wonderfully as she read this letter, and she looked up at John Goodall with a smile, which made him smile cheerfully in return.

"Well, it's settled, isn't it?" he said in a loud, hearty voice. "We shall meet at Euston at two o'clock to-morrow. And now about your horse and your dog, can I do anything? You haven't got them here, I suppose? Where are they coming from?"

"Thank you; they are both in — Street," said Theo. "My cousin, Captain North, had Aster at Hounslow till the other day, but I had him up here after he went to Scotland, because I thought I might have a ride now and then. Thank you so much; but do you really like them to come down with me?"

"Of course," said John. "We want to cheer you up and make you strong, if you will let us, and, excuse me, but I think we are setting about it none too soon."

These personal remarks sounded odd, coming from a perfect stranger, and Theo took no notice of them; but she reminded herself hastily, "He is my cousin, he is Nell's husband," and went on talking about Aster and Wool, and the arrangements for their journey into the middle of England.

"And you are coming down with me to-morrow?" said Mr. Goodall in his strong tones. "That's right."

At this moment Lady Redcliff appeared at the door, which was standing a little open. Theo did not seem startled, but a faint shade of colour came into her pale face. She gave a momentary glance at John, who appeared quite calm and unawed by the little old lady's appearance, and introduced him in her sweetest, politest manner to her grandmother.

"How do you do, Lady Redcliff?" said John, stretching out his large hand. "I hope you won't be angry with me for running away with your granddaughter. We think it's time she had some country air, you know."

He was not even frightened by Lady Redcliff's cold, astonished look, or the slight touch of her thin, icy little fingers. She turned from him to Theo, her eyebrows mounting up in an arch of questions. Then she laughed.

"Is Mr. Goodall tired of his wife already, Theo, and does he want to run away with you? You look very happy about it. Well, I am not at all particular,

Mr. Goodall; but you do shock me, I must confess. I always understood you were such an excellent person. I have heard so much of you from Theo—haven't I, Theo? And what have you done with your wife?"

"I left her yesterday in Staffordshire, and I am going back to her to-morrow, and with your leave I want to take Miss Meynell with me for a long visit," said John, grave and unabashed.

"Oh, that's all very correct and uninteresting; I can't give you my sympathy any further; you are just as good as they led me to think," said Lady Redcliff. "I am sorry for you, though, and I will give you a little advice. Don't say too much about a long visit. Theo will be tired of you in a week; she has a vaster capacity for being bored than anyone I ever knew, except myself. She is descended from me, you see, and inherits my vices."

John did not answer. He looked at Theo, but her eyes were fixed on Helen's letter. Then he made Lady Redcliff a little bow.

"You are quite right not to be complimentary," said she. "I have no virtues, and I don't care for the credit of them. Theo inherits my vices. When are you going to take her away? To-night?"

Mr. Goodall did not exactly make any answer. He looked again at Theo; it was plain that her grandmother's account of her had frightened him a little. He turned quite away from Lady Redcliff, bending himself towards Theo, and said very gravely and distinctly:

"You like to come?"

"My dear Mr. Goodall, she is enchanted," said Lady Redcliff. "She is bored to death with me; you can see that in her face; and she is only afraid to speak or look now because she feels too happy. I was only talking about the future just now—and, after all, your wife must be a charming creature, and will be able to amuse her for a week or two, I dare say. Are there plenty of young men in your neighbourhood—agreeable men, like yourself?"

At this moment Theo flashed a glance at her grandmother, by which John was really startled; and perhaps he began to wish that Helen had never sent him on this errand of kindness and hospitality. It seemed as if there were some family likeness between these ladies, after all. But then Theo's pale, beautiful face was

turned to him again, and her eyes, which had just been so angry, were full of sad sweetness as she said:

"It is very kind of you and Helen to want me to come. I like to come extremely, and I will be sure to meet you at the station to-morrow. Two o'clock, did you say?"

"Two o'clock—yes," said John; and then he thought that he might go, and stood up, looking down with sturdy coolness into Lady Redcliff's small, pinched, maliciously-smiling face. "No," he said, "my country is not very gay, though there are plenty of people in it. We have life, but not society, I'm afraid."

"Well, life is a very good thing. Here in London we have death," said Lady Redcliff.

John hastily wished them good-bye, and went. He squeezed Theo's hand, and looked straight into her eyes, saying: "To-morrow." As he walked down the street, he said to himself: "Poor girl, poor girl! What an awful, horrible old woman!"

"A very fine specimen of a potter," said Lady Redcliff, taking Theo's arm to go upstairs. "How fat he is, and how brilliantly agreeable! Really, my dear, I envy you a few weeks with him."

"He is very nice, grandmamma, and there was no reason for you to be so dreadful to him. He is a good, kind fellow, and I know I shall like him very much."

"He is more amusing than Hugh North, because he shows his outraged feelings—a child of nature, in fact," said Lady Redcliff. "But I thought I was charming to him. I certainly felt very much pleased with him for taking you away, and I said nothing but the truth about you. You are the most dreamy, the most lackadaisical, the most easily bored person, with the most ungoverned temper, that I ever knew in my life. Except myself, as I said. I was just like you when I was young."

"Were you, grandmamma?" said Theo, startled.

"Ask any of the people who used to know me," said Lady Redcliff triumphantly.

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PRICE TWOPENCE

A DRAWN GAME.

BY BARTIL.

AUTHOR OF "LOVE THE DEER," ETC.

CHAPTER XXXI. THE WILL.

MR. TUCK had been taken ill in his bedroom, which he seldom left now, and seldom allowed Mrs. Tuck to leave. However, she took advantage of a moment when he was composed and seemed asleep, to steal out of the room with the newspaper.

She found Ida alone in the breakfast-room.

"Has the man gone for the doctor, dear?"

"Yes; he went at once. Is he very ill, Mrs. Tuck?"

"Very—I don't think he can get over it. Ida dear, it was some scandal about your cousin."

"About—about Archie?" gasped Ida, growing white as death.

"Yes, dear; I thought I'd better tell you myself, as you were sure to hear of it soon from some one."

Ida sank into a chair and looked up wild and scared, with a piteous appeal for mercy in her face. Mrs. Tuck, though she read her love for Archie in the look, was so moved by its misery that she impulsively began to discredit the report, which she had meant to quote as indisputable.

"My dear child, it's only a report in that abominable poachers' paper, and it's as likely as not to be a pure invention. It's perfectly disgraceful that these newspapers should be allowed to scatter such scandals about. They might as well fling dynamite into a house."

"Is that the paper?" asked Ida in a voice that trembled and faltered.

"Yes, dear; I was going to put it into the fire. It's not fit reading for you or anyone."

"Was it about that—that case you were talking of yesterday, Mrs. Tuck?"

"Why, you had heard the report already!" cried Mrs. Tuck in amazement.

"No; I hadn't heard it. Please send the paper to Mrs. Pybus, and I shall write and explain."

"It's not a paper to send to any decent house," said Mrs. Tuck doubtfully.

For, suppose the report really were untrue, and could be proved untrue to Mr. Tuck's satisfaction, and before he had made his will!

"Please send it," repeated Ida entreatingly; "they ought to know of it to contradict it."

But there was little hope of contradiction in her tone.

"Well, my dear, I'll send it, if you wish, and if you'll write to explain."

"I'll write—I'll write at once," rising, with a longing to be alone.

Mrs. Tuck, understanding this, said as she stooped to kiss her:

"Do, dear; you can say that though it's a scurrilous little paper, which lives on lies, it would be as well to contradict the report at once, as it may get into respectable papers, and as it has so shocked and distressed Mr. Tuck that he is dangerously ill."

After Ida left the room, Mrs. Tuck stood with knitted brows wondering how Ida came to guess that the report referred to the scandal of which herself and Dick had talked together yesterday morning.

"She must have heard something about it when she was staying there; and, if so, it's true," she concluded complacently. Then, to justify her complacency, she added: "And, if true, it's best she should know it, and be cured of her foolish fancy for so worthless a scamp."

At this point of her meditations she was summoned hastily to attend Mr. Tuck, who had just missed her from his bedside.

"Why did you leave me?" he asked in a tone of childish querulousness.

"I went to make sure the man had gone at once for the doctor, dear."

"You—you think me very ill?" he asked with frightened eyes fixed eagerly on her face; for, generally speaking, Mrs. Tuck made light of his attacks. But now she not only thought him very ill, but thought it well that he should think so.

"Now, James dear, you mustn't worry; you know it's the worst thing for you."

"Do I look very ill? Fetch me the glass." This was a constant request of his in his illnesses, real or imagined, and she knew he wouldn't be pacified till she had brought the glass to him. "There's that livid look!" in a terrified voice, alluding to a symptom once mentioned by his doctor.

"There, dear, lie down. You're flushed and excited by that report."

He took another long look at his face before he would allow her to replace the glass, and then lay back with a groan upon the pillow.

"And the pupils are dilated. Don't they look to you dilated?"

"It's the darkened room, that's all."

"Do you think it was he spread that report that I was going to die?"

"Who?"

"The doctor."

"The doctor! Of course not. It was probably that young Guard, who wanted, as your heir, to borrow money for his debaucheries. He would get it on easier terms if it was thought he was coming into the property at once."

"Coming in for the property!" raising himself suddenly, in the strength of his excitement, into a sitting posture, and then sinking feebly back upon the pillow.

"Well, but, James, he is coming in for it; and, of course, he knows it, and everyone knows it. If you died to-morrow he could turn us out, and would, too, at once."

"You think I'm dying?" turning a sharp, eager, haggard look upon her.

"I don't think you're dying, dear; but you're in a very weak and nervous state, and need to have your mind quite free from excitement and anxiety. I believe you would be better if your affairs were settled. You wouldn't then be worried by the fear of this dissolute nephew of yours squandering away the property."

Mrs. Tuck, who knew her husband by heart, plainly thought he would be moved to make his will much more by his disgust and dread of his nephew than by his love for herself or Ida.

At the moment, however, Mr. Tuck had no room in his mind for either motive. It was plain that his wife, who usually made light of his attacks, now thought him very ill indeed, and his anxiety as to who was to succeed him was nothing to his anxiety about his being so soon to be succeeded.

When, in the French apologue, the cook consults the poultry about the kind of sauce they would prefer to be eaten with, his counsellors cackle unanimously that they don't want to be eaten at all—which is declared to be beside the question. Similarly, it was too much to expect Mr. Tuck to be interested about how he was to be devoured, when the mere fact of his being about to be devoured at all was of such absorbing importance to him.

Disregarding, therefore, Mrs. Tuck's hints to settle his affairs (which in truth he had hardly heard), he said:

"I think I had better have advice from London. What do you think?"

"We can ask Dr. Kirk if he thinks it necessary," she answered, a little out of patience.

"I don't think Kirk quite understands my case."

"I could telegraph for Dr. Rainsford from Ryecote, if Dr. Kirk consents to meet him."

"What's Kirk's consent to do with it?"

"It's the etiquette of the profession, dear. But I'll telegraph at once, if you like, as I know Dr. Kirk won't be offended."

"I think I ought to get other advice!" interrogatively and irresolutely, not unmindful of the expense.

"Well, dear, I can telegraph;" then, as she reached the door, she turned to add, as an after-thought: "I may as well telegraph at the same time for Mr. Meade, James."

Mr. Meade was his solicitor.

"Meade! What for?"

"We must have the report that you've adopted this young Guard contradicted before it gets into the London papers. It will get into them, if we don't, for they all got hold of that wretched girl's story."

"But——"

"Now, James, I really cannot have you upset again to-morrow, as you were this morning. Another shock of that kind might be fatal. You can tell Mr. Meade how you mean to dispose of your property, and he can then give an authoritative contradiction to that disgraceful report. No, no," as Mr. Tuck was again about to speak; "no, no. You may not care about appearing in every newspaper in England

as disgracefully connected with this abominable scandal; but I do, and I mean to stop it in the only way in which it can be stopped effectually."

Of course no one knew better than Mrs. Tuck that in all England you could hardly find a man more morbidly sensitive to public criticism than her husband.

He was silenced by the horrible picture she conjured up before him. But, even if he hadn't been silenced, he must perforce have been silent, since Mrs. Tuck had discreetly hurried from the room.

Before she could send the telegrams, Dr. Kirk appeared. After answering the usual greetings and enquiries about the patient, Mrs. Tuck said pleasantly:

"He's so nervous, doctor, that I know you'll not be offended by his wish to have other advice. Some doctors seem to regard their patients as preserves, where no one has a right to kill but themselves. But you can well afford to be generous, for you know our confidence in you. It's not shaken in the least, I assure you; but he's so nervous from a shock he had this morning that he's not quite himself. You saw the story about that girl who tried to commit suicide?"

"Miss Bompas?"

"Yes. Well, a paragraph appeared in that vile Radical Ryecote paper this morning saying that Mr. Tuck's nephew and adopted heir was her betrayer. You can fancy the effect it had upon him. It has, of course, made him most anxious to settle his affairs at once, and I was just going to telegraph for Mr. Meade to take instructions about his will. I was at first afraid that the excitement might upset him, but on the whole I thought he would be better if he had this anxiety off his mind once for all. Don't you think so?"

"Certainly, Mrs. Tuck—most certainly. I have always thought so, and always said so, you will remember." Which he had, times without number—at Mrs. Tuck's suggestion.

"And there's another thing, doctor. After his affairs are settled, Mr. Meade can truly and authoritatively contradict the report before it goes farther. If it once got into the London papers it would kill him."

"So it might—so it might, indeed," murmured the doctor, nodding sagely, as though there were a good deal in that.

"Then, doctor, you will reassure him that the excitement of giving instructions about his will can't be as bad for him as all this worry and anxiety, and the fear to open a newspaper lest he should find himself gibbeted in it."

"I'll do what I can, Mrs. Tuck—what I can. And about this other advice?"

"He might have it, as a matter of form, if it made his mind easier, don't you think?"

"It's as you think, Mrs. Tuck."

"As I think! I think he couldn't possibly be in better hands. But if he has a fancy for a second doctor, it's best to humour him, isn't it? A bread-pill may work wonders if it's gilded and expensive, and taken with faith."

"And who's the bread-pill in this case, Mrs. Tuck?" he asked, laughing uneasily between the fear that it might be a Kingsford rival and the hope that it might be a London celebrity.

"It's for you to prescribe it, doctor. I think I have heard you say that Dr. Rainsford, of Ryecote, was a clever man?"

"He stands first among our local practitioners."

Mrs. Tuck, however, disregarding the hint to have in London advice, replied promptly:

"Then perhaps you would be kind enough to arrange for a consultation with him, doctor?"

Dr. Kirk, having thus got plain, though implicit instructions—made up in "the gilded pill" manner—went upstairs to the patient to carry them out. Not having, however, Mrs. Tuck's art of putting things, he contrived to produce the reverse effect of that intended by his prompter.

After examining and cross-examining the patient in the precise way and words used a hundred times before, he put on an air of ominous solemnity, and informed Mr. Tuck that he must have had some shock that morning—bad news, perhaps?

Mr. Tuck, astonished by his sagacity, admitted that he had been so shocked, and explained how.

Then the doctor informed him, with the delicacy of a judge assuming the black cap, that such another shock would be fatal, and that he must avoid agitation of all kinds at all risks. He then proceeded to explain that he meant by "such another shock" a repetition of the scandalous report in other papers, which might be prevented by an authoritative announcement that he had settled his affairs very differently from the "Ryecote Rights of Man" version of his will.

Not one word of this clumsy explanation did Mr. Tuck heed, or even hear. He was absorbed by the horror of the announcement that the slightest agitation in his present state would be fatal. He lay still, fearful even of moving, looking

up into the doctor's face with the bewildered expression of one who only half realises the horrors he hears.

"Do you mean it's my only chance—absolute quiet?" he gasped at length.

"Freedom from agitation, my dear sir—freedom from agitation."

"But it is a chance; I may get better if I'm not worried?"

"No doubt, no doubt. What you want, my dear sir, is not medicine, but freedom from anxiety and excitement."

After pondering a little upon this, Mr. Tuck made a most unexpected application of the advice.

"Doctor, might I ask you to see Mrs. Tuck at once, and prevent her telegraphing for Mr. Meade?"

"But, my dear sir——"

"Pray see her at once, or she will have sent the telegram," he cried excitedly.

"I think, Mr. Tuck—I think, my dear sir——"

Here Mr. Tuck in his excitement raised himself on his elbow to reach the bell-rope.

"There, there, let me assist you, my dear sir. So," for Mr. Tuck would have fallen feebly back but for the doctor's support.

"Will you——"

"Yes, yes, my dear sir, I'm going; pray don't excite yourself."

And the unfortunate doctor had to return to announce to Mrs. Tuck, as the result of his mission, that he had thoroughly frightened her husband, not into, but out of all thought of making his will.

"He desires me to ask you not to telegraph for Mr. Meade."

"Not to telegraph for him! But I have. Didn't you explain to him, doctor, that it's the only way to stop this abominable report?"

"I tried, my dear madam, but he misunderstood me a little, and thought I had forbidden any kind of agitation."

"I think, then, you had better explain yourself a little more clearly, doctor, and prepare him for Mr. Meade's visit," said Mrs. Tuck with evident annoyance.

"I'll try, madam, I'll try; but I am afraid——"

"I really can't imagine how you've contrived to upset him so," interrupted Mrs. Tuck with growing petulance. "Before you saw him he quite agreed with me that Mr. Meade should be sent for at once."

"It was a mere misunderstanding, Mrs. Tuck, I assure you."

"Then pray set it right," snappishly.

Thus the unhappy doctor had to return on the forlorn hope of persuading Mr. Tuck that

to make his will at once would have a sedative effect upon his nervous horror of death.

"Mrs. Tuck had already telegraphed for Mr. Meade, my dear sir, by my advice," he blurted out nervously; adding, in answer to Mr. Tuck's look of bewilderment: "I thought if your affairs were settled——"

"I'm dying?" clutching feebly at the doctor's sleeve.

"I hope not—I think not, my dear sir. I am sure you would soon be better if your will were made, and all anxiety about a provision for Mrs. Tuck were off your mind."

"It's not on my mind at all," he answered fretfully, a shrewd suspicion occurring to him that his wife had instigated the doctor to worry him into making his will.

His will once made, it would be her interest that he should die; whereas, if he gave her distinctly to understand that the making of his will was contingent on his recovery, she and the doctor would do all they could to keep him alive. Yet nothing could have exceeded the unwearying, unmurmuring, unremitting attention of Mrs. Tuck to him up to this.

"And there is that report," feebly persisted the baffled doctor, "that report about your nephew being your adopted heir. If your will were made it could be contradicted by Mr. Meade."

This feeble plea left no doubt at all in Mr. Tuck's mind that the doctor had got instructions from Mrs. Tuck, not only as to terrifying him, but as to the very mode of terrifying him, into making his will.

"Why shouldn't Meade contradict it without my being worried in this way?" he cried with extreme irritability. "You say the least agitation may be fatal, and yet you want to worry me with lawyers and business."

"A shock, my dear sir; I only said a sudden shock like——"

"As I'm so ill I think I should have other advice, if you don't object."

"Certainly, Mr. Tuck, if you wish it," replied the doctor stiffly. "Mrs. Tuck suggested a consultation with Dr. Rainsford, of Ryecote."

"I should like advice from London," said Mr. Tuck with unusual decision in his voice. He preferred a doctor of his own choosing to one suggested by Mrs. Tuck, who would probably be coached up by her as Dr. Kirk evidently had been.

"That would be much the best, my dear sir," said the doctor eagerly with restored good-humour. "There's Dr. Darcy, he's

a specialist in nervous disorders; I should decidedly recommend him."

Mr. Tuck, having thought over this for a little, asked, with a relapse into his feebleness and irresolution:

"What would his fee probably be, doctor?"

"I should say, certainly not more than a hundred guineas at the outside, my dear sir."

Mr. Tuck almost groaned.

"If I'm not better to-morrow, I will think about it," he said plaintively.

The doctor, leaving him soon after, had to report his failure to Mrs. Tuck, who, being better prepared for it now, had the sense and self-command to conceal her irritation. She didn't express it even to Mr. Tuck when she rejoined him.

"I've telegraphed for a nurse, James, as Martha is quite worn out," she said; but made no allusion to her telegraphing for Mr. Meade. Nor did Mr. Tuck. Fearful of the least discomposure, he was not likely to meet a quarrel halfway.

Mr. Meade, who was away when the telegram reached his office, did not turn up at The Keep until late in the evening, which, as Mrs. Tuck informed him, was unfortunate, since her poor dear husband was hardly now in a state to attend to business.

However, she could tell Mr. Meade his wishes as to the disposal of his property, which Mr. Meade might put into due legal form, leaving Mr. Tuck the mere trouble of hearing the will read over and of signing it. Then Mrs. Tuck dictated a will which left everything to Ida, with the exception of a really moderate provision for herself.

While Mr. Meade was draughting this, Mrs. Tuck returned to prepare her poor dear husband to sign it.

"Mr. Meade has come, James."

"I shall not see him. I've not sent for him. You want to worry me to death, but my death won't benefit you," he cried in an outburst of unexpected anger, which had been brewing all day.

"Your death would benefit me, since I would, I believe, come in for a third of your property; but I don't want more than that, or as much as that. I want you to make some provision for Ida, that is all," said Mrs. Tuck, with a cutting kind of coolness which cowed and somewhat abashed him.

"I'm not fit to attend to business; you know very well I'm not. The doctor said the least agitation or exertion might be fatal."

"You've only to hear the will read and sign it, if you approve of it. I've told Mr. Meade what your wishes were, as you've

expressed them again and again to me; and he has written them out, and will read them over to you, and you need do nothing but sign it."

"Let him leave it. I sha'n't see him; I won't see him. I shall sign it when I get better. I promise you, if I get better, to sign it," to give her distinctly to understand that her interests were rather on the side of his life than of his death—a piece of crafty diplomacy which had been much in his mind all day.

"But if you don't get better, Ida will be left without a penny, and that nephew, as the paper truly said——" Here she was interrupted by a knock at the door. "Come in."

"The nurse, please, ma'am," said the servant, ushering in Mrs. Bompas.

Mrs. Bompas, having been not unnaturally taken for the expected nurse, was at once shown up, according to Mrs. Tuck's direction, to the room.

"You're the nurse?" said Mrs. Tuck doubtfully, as Mrs. Bompas looked rather of the Gamp species than of the new school of nurses. Mrs. Bompas, who was in a highly sensitive stage of intoxication, was so grievously affronted, that her manner changed in a moment from deprecating servility to aggressive insolence.

"I beg your pardon, ma'am, I'm no more a nurse than yourself, nor as much—nor as much now!" facing Mrs. Tuck with arms defiantly akimbo. "I'm the mother of that poor girl who was driven to drown herself by your nephew——"

"Oh, you're the mother of that creature," interrupted Mrs. Tuck, with a scorching scorn in her voice. Whereupon Mrs. Bompas, raising her voice to a shrill scream, and advancing so threateningly to the side of the bed, that Mr. Tuck, in his nervousness, really expected to be shot or stabbed, poured out a flood of drunken abuse, intermingled with threats.

Mrs. Tuck rang the bell frantically, and sent for the footman to have her dragged out of the room and out of the house. Mrs. Bompas, hearing the order, grew more and more violent, shook her fist alternately in Mr. and Mrs. Tuck's faces, defied any one to lay a finger upon her, and when the footman appeared, made such a vicious and sturdy resistance, that another footman had to be sent for before she could be dragged out of the room.

The shock of this disgusting and alarming scene stunned Mr. Tuck. He lay quite still, and seemingly insensible, with eyes half closed, for some hours after. He

seemed to drink mechanically the brandy forced between his lips, and to be unconscious of everything said or done to him. At last he woke up suddenly, and asked in a clear, strong voice, very unlike his usual quavering and querulous tone:

"Is she gone—that woman?"

"Yes, dear, long ago. You're better now?"

"She said he was going to marry her daughter?"

"Yes, dear. I shouldn't worry about her, James."

"Is Meade gone?"

"Of course, dear. I couldn't think of troubling you with business after such a scene."

"If he's written that will out, I'll sign it—I'll sign it now," eagerly. "I'm not going to die. It's not that. But I'll sign it. I should feel better if it was signed."

"Very well, dear. I shall have Dick and the butler called up to witness it, and meantime I'll read it over to you."

Having given orders for the two witnesses to be called up, Mrs. Tuck read out the will, which he seemed to listen to with intelligent attention. However, he made no remark upon it, but was childishly impatient for the witnesses, one of whom, Dick, was unconscionably slow in appearing. In fact, he fell asleep after the first summons, and had to be called again.

At last he appeared, looking much aggrieved.

"I want you to witness my will."

"Very happy, I'm sure," murmured Dick sleepily.

"Let me help you to sit up, dear," said Mrs. Tuck, about to put her arm around him.

"No, thank you," he said fretfully, "I can sit up quite well by myself," so protesting against what the will suggested—that he was dying. By a violent effort he got into a sitting posture, but before Mrs. Tuck could support him with her arm, he fell back with a gasp—dead.

ARMINIUS VAMBÉRY.

THE nomad instinct is strong in human nature, and ought naturally to be strongest amongst those Magyars who, not many centuries ago, were a nation of nomads. The marvel, therefore, is not that Arminius Vambéry should have been an enthusiast in wandering, but that, beginning life as he did, he should have been able to wander to such good purpose. For he had absolutely no advantages to start with.

Nobody could have been more heavily handicapped for life's race. His family was very poor; and his father dying when he was a babe, his mother married again, hoping the stepfather might be helpful in bringing up her first husband's orphans. She was disappointed; and the elder children were turned adrift as soon as they were able to do anything. Arminius, being lame, was kept at home till he was twelve, and so got some schooling, his wonderful memory and his love of languages astonishing his masters. He used even to learn by heart long pieces of Latin, of which language he as yet knew nothing; but all his school aptitude did not save him from being apprenticed to a ladies' dressmaker, a light business suitable to a lame lad.

This, however, was too much for him. "When I had got so far," he says, "as to be able to stitch two bits of muslin together, a feeling overcame me that Dame Fortune had something better in store for me."

He ran away, and got the village inn-keeper to take him as boot-cleaner, supernumerary waiter, and tutor to his only son. This could not have been very pleasant work; especially when, boylike, he got zealous about his pupil's advancement, and the lad, older and stronger than his teacher, gave him a good thrashing. He held on, however, till he had saved the vast sum of eight florins, and then he put himself to the gymnasium of St. George, near Pressburg.

His life there was hard enough. His eight florins he spent in books, and lived on the charity of seven families, who each gave him once a week a dinner, and also a big slice of bread for breakfast and another for lunch. For clothes he had the cast-off suits of the richer boys; but, instead of snubbing or neglecting him, his professors took extra pains with one who had passed second in the head form in Latin, and who soon began to talk Latin with fluency. Before long he learnt all that was to be learned at St. George's, and at the age of fourteen moved to Pressburg, and entered himself at the high school. This was a rash step. There were no kind families there who, knowing all about him, were willing to give him meals. He had, like some of the traditional Greek philosophers, to work half-time as a servant that he might go to school the other half. Then he tried pupils—"the she-cooks, chambermaids, and other individuals thirsting for knowledge." One can well believe that "every stone of the pavement of that beautiful town by the blue Danube, could it but speak, might

tell some tale of misery that I endured there. But youth," he says with that cheerfulness which is the key to all his success, "is able to bear anything and everything." All this time he was combining hard work, such as would have made most Jacks very dull boys indeed, with abundance of play. His fare was bread and water; yet he grew up sturdy, getting quite the better of his lameness, and was "the life and soul of all fun and mischief in the schoolroom, and out of it." When the holidays began, off he went, without a kreutzer in his pocket, on a ramble to Vienna, or Prague, or some other notable place. When he came up with a waggon or carriage he would begin a good-humoured talk, and so make sure of a lift. At night he always made for the parsonage of the nearest village, and began to talk Latin to the priest. This ensured him bed and board and a trifle to carry him on his road; and, "by a few neatly-turned compliments to the housekeepers, I generally succeeded in having my bag filled with provisions for the next day." On this he moralises in his peculiar English, quaint from the very pains which he takes with it: "Truly politeness and a cheerful disposition are precious coins current in every country; they stand at a high premium with young and old, with men and women; and he who has them at his disposal may very well call himself rich, though his purse be empty."

Besides what he learnt at school he was, all this time, teaching himself. When he began a new language he was never satisfied till he could learn a hundred words a day. At sixteen he knew Greek and Latin, French, German, and Slav, besides his native Magyar; and then he at once fell upon the other branches of the Aryan family—the English, Danish, and other Germanic tongues; the Russian, Servian, and the rest of the Slavonic languages. "It was all vanity," he says. "I had no idea of ever making use of all this knowledge." He had meant to be a doctor or village lawyer; but he found he could master a language so easily and get so praised for his proficiency, that he went quite out of the groove. By-and-by people got tired of his spoutings of poetry of all nations, gesticulating at the same time in the most emphatic manner. It was whispered that he was off his head, and his enthusiasm cost him his place as teacher. Nothing daunted, he at once took up Turkish, which is as much akin to

Magyar as, say, Dutch to Danish. He could not afford a dictionary, and so had to blunder on through a little selection-book with literal translations in German. So slender was his stock of words that he sometimes found out he had been wrong all through after he had patiently worked through a big volume.

At last, however, he was able, being then in his twentieth year, to read and understand a short Turkish poem; and then he would tarry no longer, but, getting help—he does not tell us how—from Baron Joseph Eötvös, he started for Galacz with little more than a knapsack bursting with books.

A man who can talk a dozen languages must always be a somebody amid the polyglot crowd that fills the deck of a Lower Danube steamer; and when the dinner-bell rang, one of his admirers was pretty sure to get hold of the youthful prodigy and bring him a ticket. Failing this, Arminius would hang about the kitchen reciting Tasso or Petrarch—the cooks are almost all Italians—and thereby winning a good plate of macaroni, followed by a slice of meat. The "Mille grazie, signore," with which this was received meant, he tells us with perfect naïveté: "May I come again in the evening?" "Come whenever you like," would be the laughing reply, and so he lived well, at no cost to himself, all through the voyage.

After Galacz he devoted himself chiefly to Turks, talking whenever he had the chance, and watching with breathless attention their demeanour at prayers, even to the motion of their lips as they shaped the to them unintelligible Arabic words. The Turks received him very graciously—he always has a good word for this much abused people. They had a notion that the Magyars were ripe for conversion en masse to Islam, and they fancied that this very intelligent youth might be the first fruits. He had the best of it during a storm; for, while his Ottoman friends filled the brief intervals of their sea-sickness with appeals to Allah, he looked at it all through a halo of poetry, thought of Camoens, and Byron, and Tegner's Frithjof, and talks of the ship "dancing up and down the mountain-like waves like a nimble gazelle."

But, despite a carpet which a Turk had given him, he got chilled to the bone with the cold rain, and could not walk about, owing to the heap of ropes, arms, baggage, and prostrate forms. Aft it was all clear, with only one passenger parading in solitary grandeur. "How to get hold of him?"

Arminius looked, and, guessing at his nationality, began repeating the *Henriade*. The bait took; it was so "bizarre" to hear Voltaire's lines coming from among a heap of Turks. The first-class passenger edged nearer, and soon began talking. He was a Belgian secretary of legation, and the young Hungarian found his friendship very useful by-and-by.

At first life was rather hard in the Turkish capital. His Hungarian hat attracted an exiled compatriot, who shared with him his one room. "I couldn't sleep," says Vambéry, "and all of a sudden I became aware that now one, and again the other of my boots were moving about by themselves." "Do sleep!" groaned his friend in reply to his repeated questions. "It's nothing but rats playing." Before long he got rather better quarters at the Magyar (exiles') club. They lent him the tricolour for a coverlet, the secretary saying: "Friend, this flag has fired the hearts of many; wrap yourself up in it; dream of glorious battle-fields; maybe it will keep you warm too." But a man must eat as well as sleep, and happily Arminius had many strings to his linguistic bow.

He soon found a German who wanted to learn Danish, and began reading Andersen with him. Then a rich young Turk came to learn French, or rather to play at learning it, and next our Hungarian was installed in the family of Hussein Daim Pasha, as teacher of his son, Hassan Bey. It was the very thing he wanted. "Oriental quiet and Turkish comfort, the dignified and patriarchal air of the whole house," were in striking contrast with his beggarly quarters at Pera, and there was a worthy old Anatolian Vekilkhardj (major-domo) who taught the novice how to sit, yawn, sneeze, and carry his head and hands with propriety. A Bagdad mollah, too, Ahmed Effendi, "a man of rare gifts, vast reading, ascetic life, and boundless fanaticism," took him in hand, thinking that, as his pasha called him Reshid (the bravely discreet), he must be very near conversion. By him he was taught Persian, and gradually shaped into a thorough Asiatic. Ahmed had been all through the Crimean war as a Ghazi (warrior zealot), fighting bare-headed and bare-footed, always to the front, never laying down sword and lance, save when, five times a day, he said his prayers.

No wonder such intercourse strengthened Vambéry's boyish longing to see the Far East; and no wonder he liked the Turks,

for in what other European capital, in the year of grace 1860, would an unknown, poverty-stricken stranger "have won his way, solely by dint of his eagerness to learn, and his willingness to teach, to the most distinguished circles?"

"In the West there are plenty of protectors and patrons, but the easy affability of Turks in high position, the utter absence of all pride or overbearing superciliousness, are here wholly wanting." Your Turk, whatever be his faults (and they are many), is a practical believer in that equality before God of which we talk so much. He likes wealth, because it brings pleasures; but the want of it never makes him think the less of a man who has really something in him.

But learning how to behave as a Turk, and how to talk as a Persian, did not fill up all his time. He kept translating and sending to the Hungarian Academy portions of those voluminous histories which the Sultans, who always took a chronicler about with them, have left behind. He became philological, too, and sought, by studying Eastern Turkish, to get at the mother-tongue of the Turanian Magyar; and with such success that the grateful Hungarian Academy made him a corresponding member, and offered him a thousand florins (paper; only six hundred in silver) to help him on his journey to Central Asia. They also gave him a grand Latin letter of recommendation to all sultans, khans, and beys, which he prudently left behind in Stamboul, and after spending six months and nearly half his six hundred florins in visiting shrines, interviewing Bokharist pilgrims, and otherwise fitting himself to support the character of a hadji (holy pilgrim), who, having done Mecca and the holy places of the West, was now anxious to visit those in the Far East, he started, his Turkish friends doing all they could to dissuade him, backing up their picture of the dangers of the way with the prayer, "Allah akillar" (God lend him reason). Of course, he did not confide his whole plan to them. They got him firmans for his route through Turkish territory, and private recommendations to the Turkish embassy at Teheran; and that far, at any rate, he was to travel in state as Reshid Effendi. His Effendiship stood him in good stead, enabling him to frighten off the Kurds who were hungering to spoil his Armenian fellow-travellers. Much as he likes the Turks, he never blinks the fact that their provincial government is

horrible. In an Armenian village he asked: "Why don't you get help from the Governor of Erzeroum?" "Because he's at the head of the robbers. God alone, and his representative on earth, the Russian Tzar, can help us." And such a Russophobe as Vambéry would not have added, "The poor people were certainly right in this," had he been able anyhow to persuade himself that they were wrong.

Persia, with its bazaars full of all the varied throng of Eastern life; its people, so polished on the surface, yet so savage below; its ruins; its mystery-plays, at which the spectators change in a moment from loud laughter to weeping and beating their breasts; delighted him immensely. He saw Ispahan, now sadly decayed, the huge meidan, where Shah Abbas used to review his troops, empty, yet the population cultured, "the shoemakers, tailors, and little shopkeepers knowing by heart hundreds of verses of their best poets." What a strange thing for one who had narrowly escaped being a man-milliner at Pressburg, to be going about capping lines of Saadi and Hafiz with tradesmen at Ispahan and Shiraz! At this latter place he half threw off the Turk, finding a Swedish physician, whom he at first mystified by coming to him as a mollah sent for his conversion. "I know what that means, good mollah," said the Swede, offering him a few piastres; and on their being indignantly refused, he added: "Well, I can't afford any more. You are harder to satisfy than most of your sort." This led to an explanation, and to a close three months' friendship, during which Shiraz suffered severely from an earthquake, and its wine-bibbing, excitable mob, thinking Heaven was angry with them for letting infidels live in their midst, came very near tearing down the Swede's house and killing its inmates. It is notable, by the way, that, just as an Englishman in one part of Germany is often taken for a German of another part, but never succeeds in escaping detection in the most rural part of Northern France, so, while Vambéry easily passed himself off as a Turk among Turcomans and Tartars, the sharp-sighted Persian villagers were always finding him out. They never betrayed him, though, "for, such is their Shi-ite hatred of the Sunnite Central Asians that nothing pleases them more than to see them imposed upon." No wonder they hate the Sunnite faith, for not only do its Turcoman professors harry their villages and

carry them into slavery, but also they destroy the grand remains at Persepolis and elsewhere—for which the modern Persian, though he attributes them all to Solomon and Djemshid, has great reverence. The Turcoman, on the contrary, often breaks down a grand column for the sake of the few ounces of lead with which the stones are bonded together.

After a very pleasant time at the Teheran embassy, our traveller started in good earnest as a hadji. He had taken care to make friends with all the Tartar pilgrims who passed through the city, and so deeply impressed were they with his kind attentions—doubly kind to men who were ill looked on by the Shi-ite natives—that a rumour soon got about of his being a veritable dervish in disguise. Hence he was warmly welcomed by a band of specially holy (and unsavoury) Tartar dervishes on their way back from Mecca, and the hardest trial that befell him all through was to submit to the embraces of these filthy, vermin-eaten saints.

The country between Teheran and Khiva is in great part desert—not all the dull sort of desert we think of, for those primeval seas had their rocky borders, which rise like a succession of Cheddar cliffs out of the sand, and make part of the way very romantic. Saints though they were, our party had more than their share of desert, owing to the need of giving a wide berth to the Tekke Turcomans—of whom the Russians have since given a good account—these people being such desperadoes that the proverb says: "They would sell the Prophet himself if they got hold of him."

Wherever they went, the saints were in high repute, the blessed dust of Mecca and Medinah being supposed to cling to them, and to do those who touched them almost as much good as if they had made the pilgrimage themselves. They were never in want of such food as the nomads had to give. Good store of everything filled their scrip, just as it did that of the barefooted friar in the old song. One khan at Gomuthepe had, alone and on foot, captured three Persians, and driven them eight miles into slavery. They were sold while the holy men were there, and a tithe of the price was religiously handed to them.

These Turcomans are not Mongols. One might take them for Norsemen, "with their manly forms, short riding-coats, blue eyes, defiant looks, and fair hair falling in curls on their shoulders."

It was anxious work, in the most dangerous parts, travelling "in the pitchy darkness," the camels being tied nose and tail to prevent any breaking away. By day they rested, partly because of the heat (it was May), partly because by day there was more fear of being attacked. In one place they came upon some ruins, which the Turcomans believe to be those of the Kaaba, which a lame blue devil (ancestor of the Goklen tribe) kept pulling down as fast as it was built. Wherefore Allah moved it to Mecca. And ever since there has been bitter war between the Goklens and the rest of the Turcomans. Once or twice they were terribly off for water, and once, indeed, would have perished had not the kervanbashi (caravan-leader) come upon a cache which he had stored away on a previous journey. Another time they were half the night in a salt quaking bog, not daring to move for fear of getting swallowed up. This was unpleasant, for the pungent soda smell made their heads dizzy. Before they got to Khiva the sand was so hot that even the most hardened had to fasten leather round their feet. A Russian army which crossed the same place ten years later found the thermometer rise to one hundred and fifty degrees Fahrenheit in the sun. Khiva, with its gardens, and cupolas, and towers, looked beautiful after the weary desert; but it was disquieting to hear that the khan was sharper than ever upon strangers—had quite lately, with no fear of England before his eyes, made a slave of a Mahomedan prince from India, who had come there on his travels. Arminius, however, was not to be daunted. He went in with the rest, singing telkins (hymns) as lustily as if they had been a party of Salvationists, the people pressing round to kiss their tattered rags, offering them bread and dried fruit, and greeting them with "Aman essen gheldinghiz" ("Happily arrived"). With his knack of making friends everywhere, our traveller went straight to one Shukrullah Bey, who had been ten years ambassador at Stamboul, and, when asked: "What, in Allah's name, can have made you leave Stamboul, that earthly Paradise, to come to these wilds?" he fearlessly replied, "I'm a dervish of the Nakishbend order, and my pir" (spiritual chief) "sent me to the Bokhara shrines. A murid" (novice) "is bound, you know, to obey his pir's commands." He was not found out, though he had twice audience of the khan, whom he blessed in true pilgrim style,

coupling his blessing with "thanks to Allah that the sight of his majesty's blessed beauty more than made up for all the dangers of the journey." His majesty's appearance was not prepossessing. "Every feature betrayed the debauched, dull-minded, inhuman tyrant; eyes sunken, lips pallid-white, voice shaky." And when we read of the sacks of heads, the bringers of which received robes of honour, and the eye-gouging and other fearful tortures on the old men of three hundred Turcoman prisoners (the younger were sold as slaves), enacted before Vambéry's eyes, we cannot feel altogether sorry that the Russians have got hold of Khiva.

From Khiva to Bokhara there was more desert, but with a Kalenter Khane (inn for dervishes, who are the same as our Arabian Nights' friends, the Calenders) every now and then, and Tartar villages here and there, in one of which a fair was being held on horseback, a mounted milk-seller managing to pour a drink down her mounted customer's throat. A Kirghiz woman, whom they asked how she liked this wandering life, said: "We must move about, as sun, stars, and everything are doing—only the dead and idle mollahs" (clergy) "like you can stay in one place."

At Bokhara they had lodging in a spacious tree-shaded convent, in plan much like a college at Oxford or Cambridge, and, as the Emir has no more power over the convent than the mayor of Oxford has over the colleges, Vambéry felt safe. He was struck with the beauty and wealth of the bazaar, and the concourse of all kinds of men who thronged it. During his whole stay in this dervish-ridden city he was persecuted by spies, whom, however, he set at defiance, always taking the chief seat as a dervish should, and gaining great respect among the people by his fine rosary and big turban. Worse than the spies were the rishte (*Filaria medinensis*), a thread-like worm that forms under the skin, and has to be pulled out to the length often of several yards, and woe betide you if it breaks in the process. I remember reading of something of the sort in South America, but not so bad as the rishte.

One grand difference between Khiva and Bokhara was, that at the former everybody was lavish of gifts. The khan wanted to give Vambéry twenty gold pieces, but he replied: "A dervish must not be cumbered with worldly wealth." He then begged to offer an ass for the journey. "That I will accept," said the Hungarian; "but let it

be a white one, so that I may fitly visit the holy places." At Bokhara everybody was glad to listen to their hymns and prayers, but no one gave them a single coin. Hence, after a little more than a fortnight, they pushed on to Samarcand, no longer through the desert, but through fields and past populous villages. Here there are over one hundred shrines to be visited, among them the mosque of Timur, with the great green stone on which was his throne. Indeed, Samarcand, possibly the oldest city in the world, is full of grand buildings, mostly decaying, but some of them quite new, for it is still a great centre of holiness—a place where merit may be won by building a mosque or a college for dervishes, or by restoring a tomb. The Emir, who lives half his time at Bokhara, half at Samarcand, was a pleasing contrast to him of Khiva, very pleasant to look on, but very suspicious. Vambéry had a bad quarter of an hour during his audience; but he dexterously disarmed suspicion, and managed to get, instead of the death-warrant which he feared, a robe of state and a sum of money. And now there were two courses open to him. He could either return by Yarkand, Thibet, and Cashmere, even taking Komul and Pekin on the way, or he could get quickly back to Teheran by way of Herat. I cannot understand how, being so far on the road, he should have turned his back on all the wonders of China. Probably he feared, what his fellow dervishes feared for him—want of means; among the heathen Chinese he could not hope for anything to fill his pilgrim's srip. It was hard work saying good-bye to his fellow dervishes; his heart, he tells us, nearly broke at having to practise double-dealing on men who, in perils of all kinds, had proved themselves real friends. They handed him to a party who were going by way of Herat to Mecca, and, "all crying like very children," he set out, being joined on the march by a whole caravan of Persian slaves, returning home after being ransomed by their friends.

The sad stories of these people—a father giving his all to buy his son, and then father and son being fallen on by another horde when they were almost at their village; a son coming to buy his mother, who was priced at twenty gold pieces, and finding the sum suddenly raised to forty, because the captors found the ransomer was a son and speculated on his filial affection—are enough to make us thankful that Russia is putting a stop to these horrors.

Saddest of all was the man who had lost wife, sister, and six children. Wearily, for over a year, he sought them through Khiva and Bokhara; and when he found their whereabouts, wife, sister, and two youngest children had died of hardship; and of the four surviving children, the two elder had blossomed into beautiful girls, and were therefore far above his means to buy back, and he had to be content with only two of his family. And yet there is a deal of kindness in these Turcomans. One night, after having been for hours reading aloud their own heroic ballads to a group of these wild children of the desert, Vambéry fell asleep, and was awakened by a scorpion-bite on his toe. He screamed out, and the Turcoman lying next him at once bandaged his foot till he nearly cut into the flesh, and began sucking the wound as if he would suck off the joint. When he was tired another took his place, and another, and this probably saved his life, though he was so maddened with the pain—scorpions are worst in the dog-days—that they had to tie him to a tree to keep him from dashing his head against the ground. Money now began to run very short, our dervish had turned most of his into needles, knives, glass beads, etc., to be exchanged with the Uzbeks for bread and melons. These wares filled half his bag, the other half being full of precious manuscripts, picked up in Bokhara. What told most on his purse were the heavy passenger-tolls, especially that which the Affghan customs collectors made them pay. Herat was a city in ruins, having just been sacked by Dost Mahomed. Here he was all but discovered by Yakub Khan, then a lad of sixteen, to whom he presented himself—pushing the fat vizier aside and sitting, dervish fashion, close to the prince—in order to get a little journey-money. His journey thence to Persia was the hardest stage of all. It was bitter frost, his clothing was of the scantiest, and to his appeals for a horse-rug, the hard-hearted Affghans of the caravan which he had joined would say—like La Fontaine's ant to the poor grasshopper—"Dance, hadji, and thou wilt get warm." At Meshed he got back to civilisation, and met with an English friend. Here he found that nobody would believe him to be a Stamboul man, they were all certain he was a Bokhariot, so perfect had his Central Asian speech become by continual practice. Back in Teheran he had some amusing experience of the universal official rapacity. The Shah gave him the Order of

the Lion, a poor silver plate, which he was allowed to keep, but the costly shawl which accompanied it the minister seized as his perquisite. Presents of game, shot by the royal hand, used to be made to the corps diplomatique, the bearer always expecting a good reward. These became so numerous that the ambassadors decided not to receive any but what were certified by the minister of foreign affairs. For a time this abated the annoyance, but soon it began again. It was then found that the minister issued false certificates on condition of sharing the profits, and the Shah was highly amused at this mode of taking in the foreigners.

At last Vambéry got back to Europe, and came straight to London, as being the best place for publishing his books, and the chief centre of geographical activity. Here he was made a lion, but he did not like it half so well as being the honoured friend of pashas, and hadjis, and ghazis in Stamboul. He went back to Hungary as fast as he could, and getting a professorship at the Pesth University, with a modest salary of one hundred pounds a year, gave up his wanderings and became a great authority in politics and in languages. His political books are a little out of date, the march of events, the advance of Russia, have fulfilled his prophecies; but Mr. Fisher Unwin has done good service in publishing his travels. The story is a most remarkable one, not the least wonder about it being the perfect command of English which the polyglot writer shows.

MANNERS.

It is a common enough remark of elderly persons that the manners of our generation have sadly deteriorated. The same remark has doubtless been equally common in former generations, since it is the habit of the aged to live in the past, and it is a characteristic of the human mind to remember best that which is most agreeable. The contrast and the moral, therefore, which are precluded with the mournful "When I was young," must always be received with a certain amount of reserve, although always with a proper amount of respect. We shall judge better from written records than from oral testimony, if we wish to compare the manners of the past with those of the present.

The comparison, we fear, is not always made on a fair basis. It is made between

the average man or woman of to-day and the super-average fine lady or gentleman of the last century. "The persons of quality" and the "people of fashion" when our grandmothers were young and gay seem to have been an eminently artificial, and, we say it in fear and trembling, an inordinately vain set. In the abstract, and from an ethical point of view, ruffles, high stocks, and velvet doublets were neither better nor worse than cuffs, "masher" collars, and tight-buttoned frock-coats. Now, if, as Punch's little boy said, "it is not the coat which makes the man, it's the hat," is there much to choose between a three-cornered beaver on the top of a well-powdered periwig, and a curly-brimmed glossy silk compressing a closely-cropped cranium? And as for the fair sex, well, of woman the poet has said:

No beauty she doth miss
When all her robes are on,

and the fashion of the robes matters very little so that it be the fashion. Woman in furbelows and patches was neither more nor less loveable and sweet, obstinate and intractable, than she is in crinoline and prodigious hat. But if we estimate the manhood of the time of the Regency by the beaux who spent three-fourths of the day in dressing, and the rest in strutting about "The Mall," or "The Baths," ogling, and mincing, and smirking, and snuffing, we shall make as great a mistake as if we were to gauge the intellectual qualities of young England by the conventional "masher" who frequents the stalls of some of the London theatres.

It is practically impossible to compare our manners with those of the last century. Our classes are now so merged and mixed that we cannot find a common basis for comparison, and further, the word "manners" has to us a different signification from what it had in our grandfather's day.

So far as one can judge by the pictures left to us of the society of the time, a person of "fine manners" was one profuse in pretty speeches in the company of his equals, stiffly elegant and elaborate in the movements of his body, and inclined to coarseness in the operations of his mind. Away from their fine friends, and in their adventures "down town," Tom and Jerry, we fear, were not more considerate of the feelings and the comfort of others than much-maligned 'Arry of our day. We do not forget the Sir Charles Grandison type. He was doubtless a most worthy and respect-inspiring gentleman, but he must

have been excessively tiresome to live with. Here we have the two extremes. The one who put on his "fine manners" along with his best peruke and his lace ruffles for fine company; the other, who never put them off, and who, so to speak, went to bed in full uniform.

If we have correctly apprehended the "fine manners" of the past, we do not regret that they are past. Manners should connote morals, and the morals of our time, we are satisfied, are superior to those of the time of the First Gentleman of Europe.

Good manners, some people say, consist in universal and unvarying politeness. But then, what is politeness? The Duc de Morny said that "a polite man is one who listens with interest to things he knows all about when they are told by a person who knows nothing about them." The definition is clever, but unsatisfactory. That short-sighted professor was a polite man, who took off his hat with profuse apologies when he ran against the cow. But we begin to doubt his "manners" when we find that he was only polite because he took the obstructionist for a lady. In fact, the superficial character of mere "politeness" must have been painfully evident to the professor himself when on a second collision with, as he supposed, the same animal, he emitted opprobrious language to what further research discovered to be, this time, a lady.

But politeness, you say, does not consist in merely doffing the hat? What! Then how about France, popularly esteemed the most polite nation of modern times? A Frenchman will remove his hat on passing any lady in the street, but he will not instinctively yield her the footpath, nor is he considerate of the comfort and the feelings of others before his own. The Germans are even greater hat-doffers than the French, and the amount of wear and tear which the head-covering of an average German experiences from day to day is something alarming. But a German does not always think it necessary to remove his pipe or cigar when passing a lady, and, in his own country at any rate, he holds himself at liberty to smoke anywhere and in any company. The Americans are supposed to show more deference to the fair sex than do any Europeans. Yet when we see an American monopolising the fireplace in the smoking-room with his legs, and expectorating with a Republican independence, we find cause to wonder whether the aforesaid deference is evoked from his own gentleness of heart, or is extracted by

the superior "grit" of his countrywomen. Let us not forget, however, that it was an American President who made one of the politest speeches on record. To a man who, after reading a long and dull manuscript, asked for the President's opinion of it, his reply was: "Well, for people that like that sort of thing, I think it is just about the sort of thing they would like." The exquisite delicacy and tact of the reply indicated much more than mere commonplace politeness.

There are, in fact, two kinds of politeness. There is the politeness which is symbolised by the elaborate hat-flourishing, and which is often erroneously supposed to indicate "good manners;" and there is the genuine politeness which can only proceed from good morals. Lord Chatham said that "politeness is a perpetual attention to the little wants of those we are with; by which we either prevent or remove them." In other words, as he put it, it is "benevolence in trifles." But we would go even farther than this. We would say that the "benevolence" must be so concealed that the object of the attentions shall appear the benefactor. It is not the fashion nowadays to read Goldsmith, and perhaps the shrewd observations of that learned "citizen of the world," Lien Chi Altangi, are not so familiar as they should be. But that eminent Chinese very happily defined the difference between superficial and genuine politeness. Walking one day between a Frenchman and an Englishman, he is caught in the rain. The Frenchman presses on him an overcoat with a gush of fine speeches, and the assurance that he, the Frenchman, would delight in getting wet through in his honour. The Englishman, on the other hand, offered his coat with the assurance that he neither wanted nor needed it, and that the stranger would be rendering him a service to relieve him of it. This, we think, aptly illustrates our contention. Both were equally desirous of being benevolent in small things, but while the one wanted his benevolence advertised, the other wanted his hidden.

Now we fancy it was this superficial, ostentatious politeness which constituted "fine manners" in the ideas of our grandfathers. When Swift said that "Good manners is the art of making those people easy with whom we converse," he was but saying what the Duc de Morny said better. But that is not enough. Lord Chesterfield, the former ideal mentor in such matters, said that "the manner of a

vulgar man has freedom without ease, and the manner of a gentleman ease without freedom," which is epigrammatic but inaccurate. The Chesterfieldian maxims were artificial, but really good manners must be natural, and, therefore, both easy and free. "Manners are the shadows of virtues," said Sydney Smith; and, "That makes the good or bad of manners which helps or hinders fellowships" said Emerson.

It is needless to add that we do not always find the best manners among people of fashion. But even Mrs. Ponsonby de Tomkyns of to-day is superior—take her all in all—to the Lady Sneerwell or Mrs. Dashaway of last century. Our "mashers" are not, perhaps, so graceful in their movements as the beaux of the Baths, and the young Dude who frantically clutches his hat to examine the inside as he passes his lady friends, may not be so æsthetic an object as Beau Brummell artistically flourishing his beaver. But what of that? Both are extreme types. Place a City clerk of to-day alongside a City clerk of the Beau's time, and then tell us if our national manners have deteriorated. Poor 'Arry is held up to ridicule, much of which is undeserved, but he is a more agreeable object to meet than was the 'prentice-boy of old. And even 'Arry is gradually disappearing, and will ere long be found only in the imagination of the caricaturist.

In our middle-class youth of both sexes there is frequently a self-possession of demeanour and a refined attitude of thought and speech which tend to raise the manners of our time and nation above the level of the past. It is a complaint we often hear that we have no youths nowadays. Boys spring at once into men, and even into old men. This complaint is, of course, imaginary, but it proceeds from the subdued tone which the critical habits of thought induced by our modern system of education, and of art-culture, have stimulated. Masherdom may exist somewhere, but if so it lies, like Bohemia, "in longitude rather uncertain, and in latitude certainly vague." Probably, both Masherdom and Bohemia have their most substantial existence in the pages of satirical journals. The foppishness which finds satisfaction in the extremities of fashion, and the foppishness which delights in discarding all conventionalities, are not so very different in nature. They existed, however, in all times and all societies, and are not peculiarly characteristic of our own. The dandified frequenters of West End bars

are no more representative of the gentleness of England, than the haunters of the Fleet Street taverns are of its intellect. We hear a good deal of the former from the latter, but we do not need to look long at either in an attempt to measure the progress of good manners in the nation.

In conclusion, we have no faith in the species of "good manners"—so-called—inculcated in the dancing-school, by teachers of deportment, and by books of etiquette. The most they can do is at best but to lay on a veneer, which easily cracks, and which, however showy, is of little worth. There is now a passive rebellion against that system of veneering, which is in itself a hopeful sign of the times. The higher tone of the national mind finds expression in a literature more liberal and more pure than in any previous generation. It seeks articulation in what is called the "æsthetic craze," but which is really a yearning after a higher standard of art and of taste. It looks for representation in an elevated and purified drama. Its note may not yet have penetrated to the lower strata of society, but its vibration will be more and more felt there. The Gospel of Culture is not a perfect gospel, but it is certainly doing much to mollify our national manners.

GERALD.

BY ELEANOR C. PRICE.

CHAPTER VII. A LOST CHILD.

THEO and her maid arrived at the station rather before two o'clock the next day. Combe was not in a good temper; she did not half approve of this visit to Mr. and Mrs. Goodall. Theo, after a cold, painful parting with her grandmother, was in a melancholy dream. She knew that Lady Redcliff hated letting her go, and would miss her extremely; yet no one else could have known this, for all Lady Redcliff's remarks that morning had been full of sneering contempt for Theo herself, and for the people she was going to.

As Mr. Goodall was nowhere to be seen, Theo walked across the great hall of the station, turned into the waiting-room, and sat down there, looking absently straight before her. Combe was outside, watching over the luggage and waiting for Wool, who was to be brought from the mews to go down by the same train with them.

There sat Theo in the large, gloomy room. Her black clothes were not becoming to her; they made her look pale and

ill, but she could not help being very handsome, though that cold, still, scornful face might hardly have been called attractive. Though her eyes fell sometimes on a young girl, who was the only other person in the room, she did not really see or notice her at all.

This girl, unlike herself, was very restless. She wandered round and round the room, stopping sometimes to read the advertisements, or to look at herself in the glass; sometimes she went out on the platform, and walked a few yards away, and looked up and down, and came back again; then she went out of the other door into the booking-office, and looked into the hall for a minute, and then came back into the waiting-room with an impatient sigh. At last she stopped near Theo, glancing at her rather wistfully, and their eyes met. After a moment's gaze Theo began to see her, and perceived what a pretty child she was. She was hardly more than sixteen; a fair, bright-looking girl, with a tinge of red in her curly hair which made it all the prettier, a lovely pink and white skin, small features, and innocent blue eyes which looked as if they could either smile or cry very easily. Just now they were nearer crying. She did not look clever, but certainly she was not stupid, for that short look into the cold, quiet face of the stranger, sitting there so dreamy and still, so much older, and in every way such a contrast to herself, brought her at once several yards nearer, and with a rather tearful smile she said quickly:

"Do you know, I am in such trouble!"

"Have you missed your train, or lost somebody?" said Theo kindly.

The child's sweet voice drove all her own dismal thoughts away.

"I have missed I don't know how many trains. I have been waiting here since ten this morning, and now I don't know what to do."

"Are you quite alone?"

"I have been alone all these hours. Perhaps I may tell you all about it!"

"Do," said Theo.

"I have been at school at Kensington. My eldest brother sent me there; I have only two brothers in the world. I had to stay till now because there was nowhere for me to go, but now they have settled for me to live with my youngest brother in the country. The eldest was going to take me down to-day, and he said I was to be here at ten, so of course I was. But he said he was very busy, and he might not be able

to catch that train; and if so I must wait for him, and we would go by the next. There have been three or four since then, and he doesn't come, and I really don't know what to do. Do you think I ought to stay here all day?"

"Perhaps it would be best for you to go back to the school," said Theo.

"But he might come after all, and then he would be angry. And Mrs. Keene, our principal, is going abroad to-morrow, and she can't have me on her hands any longer. What shall I do?"

There was something touching, though a little puzzling and provoking, in the girl's way of standing there and looking at Theo for help. She expected it so certainly, that Theo felt as if she must have it, and began to think what she could do. Leave Combe here, perhaps, to take care of this child, and to come down by a later train. Would that be very inconvenient to everybody? Combe would not be pleased, but after all, her business was to do as she was told.

"Combe forgets that a little too much sometimes," thought her mistress. "I believe it would be the best plan."

"It is not a very long journey, I think, but I have never travelled by myself at all," the girl said, as Theo was silent. "It is a very ugly part of the country where my brother lives, near Mainley."

"How far from Mainley?" said Theo, looking up with a sudden smile.

"Three miles, I think. What fun it would be——" And she checked herself suddenly, blushing, but Theo was looking at her very kindly.

"That makes it quite easy," she said. "I am going by this train to Mainley, with a—a cousin of mine. Of course you can go with us, if you like, and there will be no difficulty in getting to your brother, when you are only three miles from him. Perhaps he will meet you."

"How kind you are! Thank you. But I don't know, I'm sure. What will Clarence say if he does come here, and doesn't find me?"

"We will leave a message for him. There was a nice porter with my things; he looked as if he would remember a message," said Theo. "Shall we go and speak to him?"

She got up, and the girl followed her out of the waiting-room. They went on together into the hall, where Combe, with frequent glances at the clock, was standing by a pile of luggage; the porter was just labelling it for Mainley.

Wool had not arrived, nor Mr. Goodall.

"If you please, miss, what shall we do if Mr. Goodall is late for the train?" said Combe, stepping forward anxiously. "The dog isn't come, either."

"Isn't he?" said Theo. "Will you label this young lady's luggage for Mainley, please?" she said to the porter. "Where is it?" turning to her companion.

"Oh, the man said he must put it in the cloak-room."

"For this train, miss? I'll see to it directly," said the porter.

"And if a gentleman comes after the train is gone, and asks for this young lady, will you tell him that she is quite safe, and has gone on to Mainley?"

Here Theo was checked in her romantic career, much to Combe's relief, by the simultaneous arrival of two men, who came in at different doors, and walked straight up to the group in the middle of the hall. One was Mr. Goodall, with a porter leading Wool, who struggled to reach his mistress. The other was a tall, lazy, gentlemanlike, middle-aged man, with a not very agreeable expression. Theo, looking at him, was faintly reminded of somebody she had seen. She noticed him with some interest, for her young companion turned quickly to meet him, rather frightened and confused.

"I thought you were never coming," she began.

"Here we are now, and there is no time to lose," said her brother.

He was not just then looking at her, but at Mr. Goodall, and the two men lifted their hats to each other. Both looked stiff, and John Goodall's face was very stern. His eyes darted from the man to the girl, and then to Theo; these two bowed and smiled to each other as the tall man hurried his sister away.

Then followed a few moments of bustle and confusion, for they were nearly late for the train. John Goodall was in a great fuss, and Theo thought him a tiresome fellow-traveller, and wondered how Helen's placid ways would fit in with this sort of thing. After all, they were in the carriage a minute or two before the train started, and Theo saw her friend pass along the platform. There were now two men with her; the second was a rough, vulgar-looking man, with a red, close-shaven face and a bumptious air.

John Goodall gave a sort of angry grunt, and threw himself back in the corner.

"Do you know those people?" said Theo as the train began to move.

"Yes. How can they interest you?" said John crossly.

Theo looked at him and smiled a little. He passed his hand over his face, as if to brush away some cobwebs, and went on, still in a grumpy manner:

"I am sorry if I hurried you just now. I was kept by a stupid mistake, and I have been bothered this morning by some business going wrong. Had you been waiting long?"

"Not much more than ten minutes, I think," said Theo.

"I beg your pardon. What did you ask me about those people? Were you talking to that girl when I came in just now?"

"Yes. I asked you if you knew them."

"I don't know much good of them, and I wonder how you picked up the acquaintance. Helen wouldn't approve, you know."

"But I don't suppose Helen knows the girl. Tell me about them, and then I will tell you why I was talking to her."

"As to the girl, I know nothing about her."

"Except that she is wonderfully pretty."

"Well, I don't even know that. I never saw her before, and I didn't look at her just now. I suppose she is Litton's sister, poor thing! and in that case she has a valuable brother. I have heard a few things about him—nothing that you can actually take hold of, you know, but it is warning enough for us business men when all a man's history is not quite straight and above-board. He doesn't often show himself down at Mainley; nor does that fellow who was with him just now, and who certainly bears a letter of recommendation in his face. Didn't you think so?"

"You are very satirical," said Theo dreamily.

"Well, no wonder. And I'm curious too. I want to know how you made acquaintance with Miss Fane; it is not a secret, I suppose."

"Fane; is that her name?"

"If it was Litton's sister, her name is Fane. The mother married twice."

"But how very odd," said Theo, looking him full in the face and smiling. "Is she related to that Mr. Fane who came to your wedding?"

"Oh, you haven't forgotten that fellow?" said John Goodall a little uncomfortably.

"Of course not. I thought he was a friend of yours. This is very puzzling altogether."

"Well, I can explain it. The company only took these Deerhurst mines last winter, and young Fane came as manager. Everything seemed fair and right enough

then, and I took rather a fancy to him ; he was a better sort of fellow than we often get down there. He had been rather under the weather, I think, before he came ; he left the army because he couldn't pay his debts, and I suppose Litton did the best he could for him by giving him this post of manager. He told me once that Litton had done everything in the world for him and his sister—put her to school and so forth. Well, Litton may have been generous, but I rather suspect it was with other people's money. It is only within the last few weeks, you understand, that I have begun to have doubts about him. And now I have nothing to say against Fane, only if a fellow can work with men like Litton and Warren, and keep his hands clean, he is a miracle, which we don't expect in these days. It was a mistake, my bringing Fane to the wedding. I acknowledge that. But I was in a difficulty, as Helen perhaps told you."

"I remember," said Theo. "But he did no harm, and I think he was very agreeable."

"As to that, he is rather ornamental," said Mr. Goodall. "But it looked intimate ; it was taking him up, you see, to an extent that I have regretted since."

"I can't see that you have anything to regret," said Theo, with a clear memory of Mr. Fane's great superiority to the bridegroom.

"That's natural ; he is a smart fellow in his way, but we business men have to look at things from our own point of view. And now you were going to tell me how you made acquaintance with Miss Fane."

Theo told him, and her worthy cousin listened with a good-natured, rather patronising smile, but said nothing to offend her.

"Well," he remarked, "she will have a dull life of it, poor girl. They have got rather a nice little old house, with a good view over trees and meadows, right away from the smoke. The company bought it, and I have been sorry ever since that I did not buy it myself, for it is one of the best sites in the neighbourhood. I rather wish I had gone in for the mine and the whole thing, but I had other things in my head last winter."

"Helen will go and see Miss Fane, won't she ?"

"I can't say," said Mr. Goodall dryly. "We are some distance off, and Helen doesn't much care for visiting, as you know."

"But you know the brother ; and the girl is so pretty, and has such nice manners. I am quite sure Helen would like her."

"We shall see. There is no hurry about it. I have not seen much of young Fane lately, and I don't care to mix myself up with them just now."

"But Helen is not you."

Mr. Goodall smiled.

"You don't think so ?"

"Besides," said Theo, "women have nothing to do with business. You can quarrel as much as you like with the brothers, but that need not hinder Helen from being kind to the poor, lonely, harmless little sister."

"I'm sorry for her, I assure you, but I don't believe Helen would agree with you in all that. Marriage changes people's ideas. When you are married, you will find that your husband's quarrels are apt to become your own."

This personal touch put an end at once to Theo's argument. She showed no annoyance, but she turned her face away to the window, and silently reflected on the moral of all this talk, that there could be no real sympathy between people of different kinds, such as herself and Mr. Goodall. He did not seem sorry to take up his newspaper, over which he glanced now and then, with a shade of vexation, at the fair, proud profile of his wife's favourite cousin. He was very glad that Helen was not such an impracticable person ; and yet, though she provoked him, he could not help liking Theo.

The train rushed on for several hours past woods, and meadows, and cornfields, a landscape which would have been uninteresting if it had not glowed with gold, and green, and blue, in the riches of summer ; here and there a reddening tree, a soft hanging mist, a cleared harvest-field, bringing a touch of autumn to sober all the joy.

At last the horizon began to be stained with long trails of smoke, which Theo thought were clouds, till she saw the chimneys from which they were slowly creeping forth ; and then presently the train stopped at a rather grimy-looking station, with honest, ugly faces on the platform, and they were at their journey's end. As John Goodall took her to the carriage, Theo looked round and saw her girl friend again. She was walking with Mr. Warren, the disagreeable-faced man who had joined them at Euston. He had just taken a book out of her hand, and was laughing. She looked flushed and miserable, but, catching Theo's eyes, she hurried suddenly on, and Theo held out her hand to her. Mr. Goodall glanced at her curiously, but not

unkindly. Theo herself was strangely touched by the child's unhappy face, and the way in which she flew to her.

"Are you very tired?" she said in her sweetest manner. "You have had a long day. Good-bye! But I know where you live, and I shall come and see you."

"Will you, really? Oh, thank you—thank you!"

Mr. Goodall said nothing till he and Theo were driving off in his great carriage together. Then he remarked:

"So you chose to commit yourself."

"Yes, I did. I always do what I choose," said Theo, so gently, and with such a smile, that he could not even feel angry with her.

CHAPTER VIII. GERALD FANE'S HOUSE.

THE drawing-room window at Deerhurst Cottage looked out into a balcony full of flowers, over a green terrace with large bushes of fuchsia and old-fashioned roses, and carnations, and salvias, and asters, and geraniums, crowded together and growing rather wildy. At the north end of this terrace there was a yew, and a high wall covered with ivy and virginia-creeper; at the south end a great old wych-elm stretched its brown arms and hung its tresses of feathery leaves over the terrace and a lawn on the other side, which sloped up southward, bordered with box and rhododendrons, to the drive and the gate into the village.

Below the terrace, to the west, there was an orchard with old grey apple-trees, some of them now covered with fruit. The ground fell away steeply into the hollow, where was a pond nearly hidden by trees, then rising again to a grass-field, and a corn-field full of standing sheaves, then falling to flat meadows and a river, with tall rows of poplars against the sky. Farther away there were woods, and distant fields, and hills, but except on the northern horizon, where there were signs of a town behind the tree-tops, half-hidden by the shoulder of the ridge on which Deerhurst stood, no smoke was to be seen, or any sign that all this was in a country of mines and manufactures. Certainly there was a distant puffing and snorting of engines to be heard that evening, and perhaps it interfered a little with the peace of the solemn landscape, the sun gone down in stormy glory, on which Ada Fane looked out as she sat with her brother at the window; but she was almost too young to feel the sentiment of the hour or its disturbance.

He was sitting in a large armchair, and

she was opposite him on the low window-seat. The last sunset lights had caught her crop of auburn curls, so that his eyes lingered on the lovely piece of colour; but he made no remark upon it; he was quite taken up with listening to her adventures.

"And you didn't find out what her name was?"

"No, Gerald. How could I? But we shall know when she comes to see me."

Her brother laughed.

"She won't come; don't flatter yourself," he said. "She could only come with Mrs. Goodall, and Goodall won't let them. He means to cut me. Why, I don't know, but I suppose we are not smart enough for him now he is married. He has never asked me to the house once, though he dragged me to the wedding. I wish I had not gone."

"Why, when you came to see me, directly afterwards, I thought you had liked it," said Ada.

"Did you?"

"Don't be cross, Gerald, or I sha'n't like living with you. Don't you think it was selfish of old Clarence to keep me waiting all those hours because he wanted that horrid Mr. Warren to come down with us?"

"Poor little thing! Don't talk so loud; the window down there is open, and they might hear you."

"Oh no, I hear their old voices droning away; they are thinking of wine and tobacco, and not of me at all. But I should rather like Mr. Warren to know that I think him horrid, because I do."

"You are not fond of smoking?"

"I don't mind your cigarettes, dear."

"Well, as you are going to live with me, and as I am many years older than you—"

"Not more than eight, Gerald."

"Listen. You will have, of course, to do everything I tell you."

"Shall I really?"

"Yes; I mean it. And to begin with, you must be civil to the people that Clarence brings here. They may be the biggest bores possible, but you have got to behave well to them, and especially to Mr. Warren."

"I can't, Gerald. I hate him, and I shall not speak to him again if I can help it."

"That is a babyish way of talking. You will have to go back to school, if you can't behave like a grown-up person. Look here, I don't like Warren either, and I don't suppose Clarence does; but don't you see, the company depends upon him. He has got all the money. The house and the whole thing belongs to him, really and

literally; at least, if he withdrew, we couldn't go on for a month, and so he must be kept in a good temper. If I am thrown out of this work, I shall have to go to the colonies, and then I don't know what would become of you. Now you see it is our interest to be civil to Mr. Warren."

Ada sighed.

"To oblige you," she said. "But I hope he won't come here much. At any rate, I'm glad you don't like him."

"I should be happy to kick him out of the house," said her brother.

Ada sat looking up at him, as he stared out of the window, with the enthusiastic devotion of sixteen. She liked Clarence, and was grateful to him; he had always been kind to her; but Gerald was her only own brother, the hero of all her hopes and fancies, to her mind the handsomest man and the finest gentleman in England. Their mother had spoilt him to the very utmost of her power, and since her death he had not wanted worshippers, though he had indeed been lonely enough since trouble came, and this distasteful work. He disliked it more than ever now. For the last two or three years he had been in the north of England, plodding away in a colliery office where his brother had put him; solitary, of course, among his companions, who yet liked and respected him. For there really was something fine about Gerald, inferior as he was to what poor Mrs. Fane and Ada thought him. He had breeding, character, ambition; he disdained to shine among the associates to whom fate had condemned him; but his false position filled him with that sensitive pride which had made him so bitterly regret going to John Goodall's wedding. Poor fellow! he had certainly made a mess of his life so far. Two years in the army had been enough to run through the few thousand pounds that his mother had left him; he had been even more careless and thoughtless than most boys of his age. But all that seemed long ago now; at four-and-twenty, Gerald was beginning to feel himself a dismal, respectable old man; a race-horse obliged to plod in a cart for the rest of his broken-down days, and yet conscious that all the strength and swiftness were hidden somewhere in him still.

"How do you like the house?" said Gerald presently. "Do you think it is all right? Have I got everything proper?"

"I think it is all lovely. Did you get this nice furniture?"

"Well, it had to be furnished. Clarence

said it was to be comfortable, so I got everything I thought necessary. I am rather proud of the armchairs; have you tried them yet? That bookcase is a success, I think, and the piano is a good one. But it all wants a lady, of course."

"It has got one now," said Ada.

She jumped up and walked round the room, in which the most æsthetic taste could hardly have wished anything altered. Its inspiration might perhaps have been found between the quiet boards of Mr. Morris's Hopes and Fears for Art, which was lying on a small table; yet there was more of comfort than he and his school would quite have approved of; and Mrs. Fane, who had had great troubles, looked down sadly from the wall on her two darling children.

"Oak, china, books, nice greens and blues," said Ada as she wandered round. "Oh yes, it's all very satisfying, but there is one thing we want, Gerald."

"What?"

"Flowers and things to hold them. I'm sure my lady is fond of flowers, and I know she will come, whatever you may say."

Gerald laughed.

"There are plenty outside," he said, and then he got up from his chair and began following her lazily round.

Standing at the bookcase, he took out a book and turned over the leaves, while she opened the piano and ran her fingers up and down.

"Take care," he said; "perhaps you will bring Mr. Warren upstairs."

Ada shut the piano with an exclamation.

"I don't see why you and I should not live like civilised people, Ada," he said gravely. "These men won't be down here very often; the affairs are a good deal left to me, and as it is our house, I think it had better be a regular house, you know. You can look after the housekeeping; the cook is a good sort of woman, and if you are in any trouble you can come to me."

"Oh no, I shall never come to you," said Ada. "Don't be so conceited; really you are priggish. It will be delightful fun, and I shall order all kinds of nice things. By-the-bye, do you have five o'clock tea?"

"Never. That's a feast unknown. I don't often come in till after six. You will want it, of course, so mind you order it to-morrow morning."

"Perhaps I shall have the pleasure of pouring it out for Miss ——, Mr. Goodall's cousin. I do wish I knew her name."

"What did you say she was like? Tell

me again," said Gerald, his face still bent over his book.

"She is like a symphony of Beethoven's which I learned the other day. And you are like my Hungarian March, Gerald! I wonder that never struck me before."

"Can't you answer a plain question?"

"Don't be cross. Her hair and eyes are dark, but her eyes are much more than dark, they are so soft and smiling, it makes one happy to look at them. Her complexion is pale, her lips are red; I think her mouth is a lovely shape. I don't know that I ever saw a beautiful person, they are so very rare, but if I did, she is one. There is a sort of cut look about her nose——"

"Oh, by Jove!" exclaimed Gerald with a sudden laugh.

"What is the matter?"

"Nothing; only your description. It is very good, after all. Go on."

Ada hesitated, half offended, but she went on.

"When I first saw her, I felt afraid to speak to her, she looked so cold, and grave, and grand, but presently she began to look at me, quite absently at first, till her eyes woke up, and then I saw she was a perfect darling."

"Was there a dog anywhere about?" said Gerald after a pause.

"Yes, Mr. Goodall brought a collie, and he pulled to go to her, and she went and patted him. Then Clarence came and took me away."

"I know who she is—Miss Meynell, Mrs. Goodall's cousin. I saw her at the wedding," said Gerald, quietly putting back his book, and walking to the window.

Ada was full of exclamations.

"Did you speak to her at the wedding? Will she remember you?"

"Yes, I spoke to her. I took her in to breakfast, and we had a little talk about dogs. I saw no more of her, for she went away in the afternoon. No, I don't suppose she will remember me."

"And didn't you admire her tremendously? How very funny men are!"

"She is very handsome," said Gerald.

"Don't you call her beautiful?"

He stood at the window with his hands in his pockets, and looked out at the sky.

"We shall have a wet day to-morrow."

Just then a tramping of feet on the stairs, and a fumbling with the handle of the door, announced Mr. Warren, who came in rather noisily.

"Well, Fane, you are very quiet up

here. How does Miss Fane like her new home—eh? She'll soon make it pretty, I bet you. How did you come to do up this room in such a gloomy style? This young lady ought to be surrounded with roses and lilies and forget-me-nots."

"She prefers high art and sunflowers," said Gerald, turning from the window.

"Then certainly she ought to have everything she does prefer. I have left your brother downstairs over the accounts. He is too devoted to business, in my opinion. Now I think your head is none the less clear if you give it a little rest, spare time and thoughts to make yourself agreeable, and so I told him. I said that with a charming lady in the house, his dry old books shouldn't keep me any longer, and I advised him to follow me up without delay. But he's an awful persevering fellow, that brother of yours. And too clever—too clever by half, Mr. Fane."

"He likes his work," said Gerald.

He had strolled back along the room, so as to stand between Ada and Mr. Warren, who had arranged himself comfortably in the largest armchair. Gerald did not know when he had thought the man so repulsive.

"Are you a musician, Miss Fane?" said Mr. Warren in his thick, unpleasant tones.

"Would you mind playing something?" said Gerald, turning to his sister.

She looked up imploringly into his face, flushed and distressed; all her happy spirit and fun were gone. Her lips moved, and she said: "Must I?"

"Do, please," said Gerald in the same undertone.

He stood by her at the piano, while she played the wild, romantic Hungarian March which she said reminded her of him. Mr. Warren at first kept time and applauded loudly, but in the middle of her next piece she and Gerald were both startled by a sudden snore. She looked up laughingly at her brother, who was frowning ferociously.

When the music was over, as Mr. Warren slept comfortably on, the two young people went quietly out together, and Ada had her first walk about the old garden in the two light. But her question about Miss Meynell was not answered that evening.

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CHAPTER I. JOHNNY OF OREGON.

THE road, which is little more than a rough track—in the open parts, during the summer, dust; in the winter, mud—runs at this place through the virgin forest, untouched, for the most part, by axe, and almost untrodden by foot of man. It is a very remote and untrodden track; it has not yet even advanced, like a young plough-boy, to the dignity of corduroy; it runs along slopes of hills and across the valleys between them. When the way is clear of trees, which is not often, one gets a view of the blue Pacific far away in the west; every evening the sun sinks into it, making a glorious double rose of evening in the sky above and the sea beneath. Yet every half-dozen miles or so one may, perhaps—or may not, perhaps—come across a clearing or farm cut out of the solid forest, the stumps of the trees still sticking dolefully out of the ground, and the fields divided and staked out by rough snake-fences. In a few years, when the stumps have quite disappeared, and beautiful green things have grown over the ugly fences, this farm, with its backing of wood and hill, will be as perfectly beautiful as it is now unkempt, ragged, and unsightly.

You never meet anybody walking along this road, for it runs straight up into the hills, where it is presently lost; but in the fields and upon the new farms you may sometimes see a man at work. It is, in fact, on the other side of the Rocky Mountains, which seems a great way off to all except those philosophers who find the world so small; it is in the land of Oregon, on the borders of the great Pacific, where, as yet, men are scarce.

The most untidy, most uncared-for clearing along this road was one in the wildest and most solitary part of it, high up among the slopes of the hills. It seemed as if the settler had begun with immense energy, stubbing up brushwood, sowing timothy-grass, hewing the fir trunks, and laying down log-fences, as if he intended to live a thousand years there, but had then lost heart, and so suffered the weeds to grow, stubbed up no more brushwood, and left his fences unfinished.

The house belonging to the farm was nothing but a little log cabin, grey-coloured and weather-beaten, with two windows and a door in the middle opening to a narrow stoop or verandah. A little beyond the hut there ran babbling and sparkling in the sun (where it was not overhung with alder, wild-cherry, and syringa), quite the most beautiful little brook in the world. At the back of the house rose steeply a great hill covered with oak, maple, hemlock, and fir; where the trees had been cut down, but the ground not further cleared, there grew every kind of underwood, bush, briar, and climbing-plant; the wild cucumber trailing its long shoots; blackberries as big as English mulberries; huckleberries; thimbleberries; yellow salmon berries; and the sweet sal-lal; for this is the country where the King of Berry-land holds his court.

Under the trees, and wherever there is a glade or opening, there are huge ferns: it is a land of greenery and sunshine; a land where everywhere trickling streams make carpets of spongy moss, and the air is soft like unto the air of England. On the right hand, looking east, are the great mountains, and on the left, if you can see it, the broad Pacific.

High up among the hills at this time

of year, which is autumn (or else the berries would not be ripe), the farmers and their families camp out—the girls sleeping in tents and the boys in the open; they shoot, fish, gather berries, and make jam—buckets of jam, casks of jam, hogsheads of jam—breathe as sweet and pure an air as there is anywhere in the world (except, of course, Dartmoor, Hexham Common, and the top of Malvern Hill), and presently go home again, ready for the winter's dances, flirtations and sledging and skating and fun. Also on the slopes of those mountains live herdsmen, mostly eremites or solitaries, who doubtless meditate on things holy and spiritual among their cattle; and, just as the holy men of old were continually troubled by devils permitted to assume the forms of men or women—especially the latter—so these herdsmen are hindered in their spiritual musings by bears, grey wolves, and coyotes. And they do not go away in the winter like the campers-out, but abide upon the hills and endure hardness and frost, snow and hail, rain and wind, in their season.

The clearing and cabin of which I speak stood quite alone, and at least ten miles from any other farm. In Europe a man would be afraid to live in so solitary a fashion; in Oregon, loneliness is not so much felt, because there is nothing to be afraid of. Very few of these hermits in log huts have got anything to lose, and if they had there would be no one to rob them. Wayfarers by day are few and far between; wayfarers by night exist not; while as for ghosts, phantoms, wraiths, *dames blanches*, and spectres, they belong to old settled places, and have not yet had time to get farther west than New England; and have their origin in what we fondly call the Romance of History, meaning the murders, robberies, piracies, cruelties, tortures, abductions, fratricides, revenges, wraths, and violences of which, in a new country, there have been as yet comparatively few. In the matter of ghosts, the county of Northumberland alone, little though it be, would, I am convinced, prove a match for the whole of the United States taken together (with Canada thrown in), excepting only Alaska, which is a grisly and a creepy country, and haunted by troops of devils, in honour of whom the belles of Alaska blacken their faces—a thing done in no other country, and a compliment which must be received as at once delicate and unexpected.

It was a warm afternoon in late Sep-

tember; there was a feeling in the air as if, after four months—nay, six—of splendid sunshine, one ought to be satisfied and contented. Even of warmth and clear skies, there cometh satiety in the end, and certain hymns which speak hopefully concerning everlasting sunshine were written by poets imperfectly acquainted with human wants, and ignorant of the tropics. I believe an expurgated edition of that hymn-book has been prepared, in which a Paradise with occasional clouds is dwelt upon, for the use of our equatorial brethren. Nature, in fact, was saying as plainly as she could speak: "I could now, thank you, enjoy a little coolness, with clouds and rain, in order to turn my green leaves into red and crimson and gold, for the delight of humans. After that I will trouble you for the customary frost and snow; but all in moderation." Everybody who can hear the voice of Nature should immediately make haste to be in harmony with her. Then they will be strong and sturdy in the winter; hopeful in the spring, and brimming over with love for everybody, especially for those who are still young and beautiful; in the summer, they will be meditative, drowsy, and slumberous; and in the autumn, whether or no a man wears that blue ribbon about which they make nowadays such a coil, he should feel the vinous mystery of the season, and grow drunk, if only in imagination, upon the fruits and harvest of the year.

There were two men outside that log-hut on the shady side, which was the front; between them was a table (home-made), on which were cards, tobacco, a pannikin, and a whiskey-bottle. One had a chair; the other sat on an empty keg turned bottom upwards. The man on the keg was the squire or owner of the clearing, and lived alone in the hut. A man of five-and-forty, or perhaps fifty, about the middle height, and spare; he wore a long beard, and his hair was long. Both beard and hair were brown, touched with grey; he had regular features, which had been once, probably, handsome, but weak; and blue eyes, which wandered as he spoke, and were unsteady. His fingers were long and delicate; and somehow at the very first sight of him, one thought that here was a poor, weak creature, whose opinions mattered nothing, and who was perfectly certain never to get on in the world. He had a pipe in his mouth, and continually he turned upon the whiskey-bottle eyes of affection.

On the other side of the table sat his

companion, a man of much the same height and figure, with eyes of the same colour, only of a darker blue, steadier, not to say keener, in their look; his hair and beard were quite grey; his hands were strong and square; at sight of him the inexperienced, thinking of certain stories, would have said that here was a strong, brave man, one of Nature's noblemen, turned out ready-made, uneducated and ignorant, never, maybe, having read a single book; rude and rough of speech, coarse of manners; yet chivalrous as a true Castilian, honourable as an English gentleman, and as full of noble sentiments and lofty aspirations as the most cultivated Dean.

We know very well, and feel ashamed of it, that such a man cannot be found in this country of ours. He does not grow in the same soil as an enslaving aristocracy, whether of birth, education, genius, or knowledge. This man, then, would have appeared at first sight, and to persons of limited experience and unlimited imagination, a true nobleman of Nature's making. But there were about him certain outward signs and tokens, which spoke volumes to such as had wisdom, and could interpret small facts of evidence, and were not too eager to believe in the perfection of the human race. For instance, among other signs, his hands were white, which, in such a country as Oregon, bodes ill; his eye was restless, his clothes were good; therefore, whenever wise (and therefore suspicious) persons met this man, or any like unto him, they would edge away from him, avoid him, and whisper to each other such words as "sportsman," "gang," "sharper," or their equivalents, whether in Bostonian, Virginian, Kentuckian, Californian, or Oregonese; pleasant languages, every one, full of local colouring, and all remarkably like modern English.

This man had a cigar in his mouth, and sat on a chair—the only chair—tilted up against the door-posts. His feet were on the table; it is a graceful, easy, convenient, well-bred attitude, and was based by the original inventor on consideration for the comfort of others.

"Go on, Johnny," he said encouragingly. Note, that when one man calls another, without first asking his Christian-name, Johnny, this single fact saves the historian whole pages of character-drawing. Many a novel of "analysis of character" would vanish altogether if the hero were at the outset simply named Johnny. But

then that novel would never get written. Pity; but then, again, perhaps no one ever wanted it to be written. And, again, when one man, not knowing another man's Christian or surname, addresses that man, from the outset, as Colonel, that also is a fact which speaks volumes.

"I was talking, Colonel," replied the other, "about the old days, and my wife and the little one, wasn't I?" he asked with some doubt, as if he might have been talking state politics, and had, perhaps, forgotten the thread of his argument.

"You never talk about anything else, Johnny," said the man in the chair.

"Why, no, Colonel—p'raps not. You see, mate, when you've been four years and more mostly alone, and a stranger comes along and stays a week, you naturally talk about what's in your mind; don't you now? I don't know who you are, Colonel, nor where you come from, but you're good company, and I thank you for staying. Make it another week."

"Go on, Johnny! Don't get drunk till the evening, or I shall have no one to play poker with." For Johnny's hand was wandering feebly and tentatively in the direction of the bottle.

"The little maid must be growing a tall girl now," Johnny went on. "It is nigh twenty years since I saw her last, and then she was only a babe of four months. Quite a tall girl she must be growing—almost a woman now."

"Almost, indeed!"

"A surprising baby she was, with a beautiful voice already. I was sorry to come away for her sake, I remember."

"What did you do, Johnny?" The Colonel asked this question without the least hesitation or apology, though it is a most improper and embarrassing question to put anywhere in America or Australia to a gentleman of European birth and slender luck. "What did you do, Johnny?"

"Nothing," replied the other man.

"Nothing? Not any little difficulty with accounts or trust-money—eh?"

"No," he said, not at all offended by an insinuation which would have made some sensitive brothers wince and kick. "No; I was always for straight ways."

"Drink, I suppose?"

"Not in those days, Colonel. I've only been used to drink since I came to the Land o' Freedom."

"What did you come over for, then?"

"Well, it's a strange story. Some wouldn't believe it. You see, I had a wife."

"So you've told me before."

"Yes, I was married. Why I got married the Lord knows; but I did. And I had a berth in a good House at three quid a-week—more than ever I've had since. We lived at Hackney Wick then. Quite a nice house we had, with two sittin'-rooms and three bedrooms, furnished and genteel; and for a bit my Matilda—that was her name—was as contented a woman as you'd come across, in spite of my ridiculous Christian-name."

"What was your Christian-name?"

"Never mind, Colonel. That hasn't come across the Atlantic, at any rate. It was a beast of a name. The boys at school made nicknames out of it; they called me the Lord Mayor and his lordship and—never mind. The clerks in the House found it out, and made my life miserable about it. A man ought to be able to bring an action against his god-fathers and godmothers for libel; but I suppose the lawyers would get all the money, because it would have to be done under age. Don't you worry about my Christian-name, because you won't learn it. My Christian-name! When I came away, it was a comfort to think that I'd left that behind. The boys have had their fun out of me over here, you bet, because I won't shoot nor fight; but they never found that out. No, no!"

"Well, go on; one may just as well listen to your story as go to sleep. Go on, Johnny."

"We got on very well for a spell—about a year and a half it was—Matilda happy and contented, and feeling quite the lady. We had two seats in a pew at church, and the clergyman called more than once. And then a dreadful misfortune happened, though we thought it was grandeur. For Matilda's younger sister, P'leena, did a great deal better than herself, and married into carriage company and the wholesale line, at Hornsey. After that, nothing went well, and every time her sister P'leena drove over to call on Matilda—which was oftener than was necessary between married sisters, and meant display—in her own carriage, Matilda turned yellow, and had to go to bed. Then nothing would do but I must have ambition. I must rise—I must soar; she threw in my teeth, as if it was a disgrace, that I was only a clerk. Why not a clerk? My father was a clerk; so was hers; so were her cousins, and her brothers, and her friends; so were all mine. She ought to have thought of it before she

married me. I didn't want to soar. I wanted my pipe of an evening, and be left alone; soaring would have made me uncomfortable. The nagging, especially the day after P'leena had called, was more than I could bear. So I came away, and I think I've made my Fortune and done pretty well, at last." His eye ran slowly round his weedy fields, and unfinished fences, and at last rested lovingly upon the whiskey-bottle. "Pretty well—though I had a good spell of waiting."

"You call this pretty well, do you? Then, Johnny, you are easily pleased."

"This is a sweet spot, Colonel, for a man to rest in; there's a pig or two in the sty, there's a barrel of pork in the house; there's plenty of game and birds on the hills; there's oats and grass to be traded for whiskey and things. As for the wife, she's gone, and the little maid don't feel she wanted me, and I'd be ungrateful to up and cut sticks and leave this place. Besides, it fell into my hands providential—quite providential, which a man should think upon."

"How did it fall into your hands?"

"This way it was. I was going along, four years ago, alone and down on my luck, as, in those days, I generally was. Suddenly, at the turn of the road, I came upon this very clearin', and on this same identical house. The door was open and I walked in. No one in the house, but a whiskey-bottle on the table, so that I took a drink. Then I went out and looked around. Presently, I saw, lyin' under a tree, a dead man. He was quite dead; but he hadn't been dead very long, and must ha' dropped, bein' neither knifed nor shot. First, I buried him under that tree there; yes, that's his grave; then I stayed here; then I came to feel as if I'd inherited the shanty and the clearin', the pigs and the oats. If there had been any money," he added slowly, "I should have inherited that as well; but there was not any. No, there was no money, Colonel."

"Did anybody ever accuse you of murdering that man, Johnny?"

"Nobody."

"Lucky for you." The Colonel yawned. "And now I suppose you mean to stay till you send in your checks?"

"I think that is so," he replied, looking about him contentedly. The sun was sloping westward now, and the hills and forests were lying in a splendid golden bath. "Why should I move on? What could I get anywhere better than this? I

am boss. I've never been boss before. I get up when I like, I work no harder than I like. Before, I had to work as it pleased other people; here I work for myself: all the wages are my own. As for company, I don't want any but my own, seeing that most of the company in this country is fighting and quarrelling, and screechin' mad with drink."

"Don't you want to see your wife and daughter, then?"

"As for my wife I shall see her quite soon enough, because, I tell you, she's dead; therefore there's no hurry respecting her. As for my little maid, I should like—yes, I really should like to set eyes on that child again." He made a determined effort, grasped the whiskey-bottle, and resolutely filled half the pannikin, which he drank off. "A beautiful voice she had." His eyes grew softer and weaker, and he rambled in his talk, and began feebly to repeat himself. "Her mother wanted to be proud of her husband, but couldn't, she said, because he was nothing but an insignificant clerk, and contented with that and his low friends. So how could she? Lord! I was always the most contented of men. Give me my pipe, I say, and my drop of beer in the evening, with a talk and a friend or two; what more does any man want? And pay? Why, they would have advanced me to five pounds a week in time; more than ever I've had since she nagged me into running away."

"Then you did pluck up spirit to run away?"

"I did. One evening, when she'd been going on worse than usual, I put on my hat and coat, and wropped up my throat with a comforter on account of the east wind, and I said, 'Very well, Matilda, I'm off.' That's all I said. 'I'r off, Matilda.' All she said was 'Good-Lye,' and my Christian-name, which she never used but for purposes of nagging."

"So you came away, and left your wife on the parish?"

"No, Colonel, I didn't"—he said this without the least indignation at this charge—"no. Matilda had her own money, left to her and invested in houses. Now she's dead, the little maid has it, no doubt. A hundred and twenty pounds a year the money was. Perhaps it is more by this time."

"Was it settled upon her?"

"Why?" He took another drink out of the pannikin. "Don't I tell you it was her money?"

"What is the wife's is the husband's."

"You wouldn't say that, Colonel, if you'd known Matilda. You wouldn't, indeed."

"Well, you ran away?"

"Yes, I ran away." He laughed gently. "I thought I would surprise Matilda, so I took my passage that same day for New York. When I got there I wrote to Matilda. I said she'd be glad to find her husband was a man of spirit; that I was bound to make my Fortune before I came home again; and I told her where a letter would find me. She replied that she should think the better of me for the future, and as regards the Fortune I was to send it home bit by bit, as I made it, because she didn't believe, if I knew how to make it, that I had the pluck to keep it."

"I don't think," he went on after a pause, "that any man's Fortune was so slow of coming as mine. I tried it clerk-ing in a store, I tried it as a book-agent, and a bogus auctioneer's help, and a traveller in clocks and reaping-machines, and a conjuror's confederate, and an actor, and a schoolmaster, and Lord knows what. Except a preacher, I think I've been most everything. Just before the Fortune came—I mean this little clearin', and the house—I had the hardest job of all, for I hitched on to a plough-gang."

"Yes, I suppose you must have always have been a pretty useless galoot. There's lots like you, Johnny."

"Matilda," Johnny went on, heedless of these contemptuous words, "didn't quite know all that happened. No, sir, the letters I sent home would have done credit to Mr. Vanderbilt; for I told her that the dollars were running in so thick 'twas impossible to count them, but I couldn't send them home because they had all to be invested again. She wasn't so grateful for the news as she might have been, wanting all the time to take a better position, as she said, and if I was making all this money, why was she starving on a hundred and twenty pounds a year? Well, poor thing, perhaps she would have found out the truth, because she was threatening to come out after the dollars, but she was taken ill and died—all pure vexation because I wouldn't send any of it home. After that the little maid wrote instead, and I kept on, just to please her, pilin' it up about my Glorious Fortune. But, somehow, what with this unexpected Fortune and the whiskey, I've forgotten to

change the post-town and the State, and I guess she must have left off writing."

"So," said the other man, "you've got a daughter at home, and you've done nothing to prevent your showing your face again, and there's money waiting for you, and yet you stay here in this cursed lonely place without a friend"—Johnny embraced the whiskey-bottle—"or a man to speak to."

"You've been with me for a week, Colonel," said Johnny,

"And no money——"

"Enough to buy whiskey and notions," he interrupted.

"And nothing to expect."

"I expect," said Johnny, "to go on living here for a thousand years. What do I want with change? I've been driven around long enough. Land o' Freedom, is it? I've never come across any freedom. What's it like, your freedom? Show me a bit of it. All I've seen in this country is a boss at one end of a bit of work and a beefsteak at the other. As for you, Colonel, you've had a bally fine time, I guess. Euchre?"

The other nodded.

"Monty?"

He nodded again.

"Poker? I thought so, and a difficulty now and then? Quite so. I thought once of going into the sporting line myself, but I concluded 'twas unwholesome for delicate constitutions. I dare say, Colonel, you've shot your man before now? Yes, I thought so. You look like it. P'raps you wouldn't believe it, but I've never even carried a revolver, and never had a fight. Born in England, Colonel? Said so, moment I set eyes on you. In London, most likely. They all come from London. Some trouble, no doubt? Jes' so. As is most often the case, and no need to ask further. For there's more deserves the trouble than gets it, and if the jury was to change place with the prisoner, very often more justice would be done."

Johnny went on rambling in this discursive way, with an occasional sip at the pannikin, his guest paying little heed.

Presently he got up, and said rather thickly that it was close on sunset, and he must go and fix up the supper.

Two or three hours later the two men were within the hut, sitting with the table between them. On the table were a petroleum lamp, the whiskey-bottle, and a pack of cards. But unhappily Johnny had overestimated his strength of head, which

now lay on the table among the cards. In other words, he was drunk.

The Colonel, who seemed sober, sat perfectly still. Presently he rose and softly went into the open-air. It was a cloudless night, there was a perfect stillness in the air, but the Colonel looked round him with restless and uneasy eyes.

"What is it?" he murmured. "I haven't felt like this for fifteen years or more. Why, I see and feel London again. I am to give one of them a dinner at the Café Royale. We are going to the theatre afterwards. It is all just as it used to be before the smash. By this time I suppose they have got old, and there's a new lot, but they are exactly like their predecessors, and the old games go on just the same."

"Oh!" he heaved a long, deep sigh. "But it is without me. I am out of it—for ever."

He sighed again, and began to walk backwards and forwards, swinging his arms and cracking his fingers. He was living over again the old life. The rambling talk of his companion had touched some chord which awakened old memories, and these for the time maddened him. He was at Newmarket, at Doncaster, at Epsom; he was singing and drinking after a great supper; he was gambling at a baccarat-table; he was riding a steeplechase; he was acting with a troupe of amateurs; he was dancing; he was love-making.

"If I had money," he said, "I could go back to all of it. As for the old set, I suppose they are alive. They would welcome any one back again who had money to go the paca. Even if I had no money," he went on, "I might go home and pretend I had. Lots of men get on without money. Why not?"

For two hours and more he remained outside, while, within the hut, the drunken man still lay asleep, breathing heavily, his head upon the table.

Presently a chill breeze sprang up from the sea, and the dreamer returned to the hut shivering.

"Ugh!" he groaned, looking round the bare planks and comfortless room, his head full of memories of Club-land.

The lamp was burning low—he trimmed it. Then he took a drink from the whiskey-pannikin, then he sat down again with the cards and began to shuffle, deal, cut, combine, arrange, and sort the cards with deft fingers, all the time looking an imaginary partner in the face, so that when

the game should be finished, the stakes would be handed over to himself without a suspicion or any diminution of confidence. He alone is the perfect sportsman who can always land the money and never be suspected. But there are, alas ! few of these.

Presently he got tired of his game of dummy pigeon, and began to think that he was sleepy, and might as well turn in. Now his host, in offering him hospitality during the last week, had naturally reserved for himself his own bed, giving his guest a shake-down of skins and blankets, and it occurred to the Colonel that, Johnny being so very drunk, he himself might just as well take the bed, which would be easier than the shake-down on the floor. A drunken man does not mind a hard bed.

The bed-place was a kind of bunk, in which blankets were spread on straw. The Colonel began to beat up the straw and arrange the blankets. Now while he was thoughtfully preparing a pillow, a very strange thing happened. At the head of the bed he found a small recess, contrived, no doubt, by the builder of the house, for a safe receptacle of valuable things. It was, in fact, a secret cupboard ; no one would suspect such a thing in a log-hut, and, least of all, at the head of the bed-place. Secret cupboards belong to old manor-houses, granges, baronial halls, and castles, not to wooden cabins in Western States ; yet here was such a hiding-place. The Colonel, with considerable curiosity, pulled out the contents and brought them to the table. First, there were three or four little bundles of letters, tied up with string ; they were frayed at the edges and soiled, because they had been a good deal carried about in the pocket. The drunken man still lay motionless and sleeping heavily. The colonel untied the string and turned over the letters. Some were signed "Your affectionate wife." He read two or three of them, and smiled. Johnny, therefore, had told the truth ; he had really run away from a nagging wife. He deceived her as to his success in the New World ; she nagged him still by letter. The others, of which there were a good many, were written, first in a school-girl's unformed hand, but afterwards in a firm round writing, clear and strong. They began "My dear father," and ended "Your affectionate daughter, Milly Montoro."

"So," said the colonel, "I thought the man was lying. He's a poor helpless creature. Can't even lie. His name is Montoro.

How the devil do these clerks and beggars get such names ? And his daughter's name is Milly. What is Milly ? Emily ? Matilda ? What's in this bundle ? More letters, I suppose."

The last bundle was tied up with the greatest care, and wrapped in an oilskin cloth. The colonel opened it, and changed colour, turning suddenly quite white ; for the bundle was nothing else than a packet of English bank-notes—ten-pound notes, eighty of them—eight hundred pounds ! He counted them three times over. Eight hundred pounds !

As he counted them and gazed upon them, his eyes flashed and his lips trembled. Then he thought they might be forged notes. What on earth could a man want with good English notes in a log-cabin ? He held them up to the light and examined their edges and looked at the numbers. No ; they were good notes.

Then he remembered how the man he called Johnny—the Montoro man—had alluded to money. "If there had been any," he said, "I should have inherited that as well." He could lie, then, after all, this mean creature ; and he had lied.

Eight hundred pounds in notes ! And still the drunken man lay, head on table, snoring heavily.

Eight hundred pounds ! What could not be done with eight hundred pounds ?

You may invest it in the Three per Cents. and get twenty-four pounds a year for it, which is not much more than a soldier's pension of a shilling a day ; you may buy the stock and good-will of a genteel shop, such as a tobacconist's or a fancy-shop with Berlin work ; you may buy a lodging-house furnished ; you may publish two or three novels with it ; you may have your portrait painted ; you may buy a really beautiful blue vase with it—you may do quantities of useful things with eight hundred pounds ; but the Colonel thought not of these. His fancy quickly turned to London and the West End.

He stood there for half an hour and more with the notes in his hand, irresolute, listening to the voice of the Tempter.

Now the Tempter whispered this and that, but always came back to the same point, which was that with eight hundred pounds for capital a man who knew how to play might do very well in London. Why, when he—not the Tempter, but the Colonel—was a youngster he lost his whole fortune because he played with such men

as he himself had since become. Eight hundred pounds! Why with two hundred he could go back to that old life and begin again. Nobody knew anything when he came away except that he was stone broke. Yes, he could go back again. He was fifty, and he had grown quite grey. That could be remedied. It was fifteen years since he disappeared from the West End—and now he could go back again if he liked. Heavens! how he should enjoy once more the glad following of the rosy hours! Besides, as the honest and virtuous Tempter said, it was not Johnny's money at all. He had lied. He said there was no money; it was quite certainly the money of the dead man. Serve Johnny right to punish him for lying and to take away his money.

It grew late. The drunken man slept on. There are never any clocks in log-huts until the agent in clocks has called. But I think it must have been midnight when the Tempter said his last word, and the Colonel, without listening to that other voice, which said that though he had done a good many tolerably bad things, he had never done anything half so bad as what he was now going to do, and did he think that he could ever after it consider himself worthy of any respect or consideration at all? For to swagger and captain it around, to cheat and bully with those who cheat and bully—ready at a moment to fight for your life—to be a ruffian, open and confessed, hath in it something of bravery which commands a little admiration; but to be a mean, secret thief—to reward hospitality with robbery—this, indeed, is different. But this voice was a small voice, and the other was loud and persuasive. Therefore the Colonel put on his hat, turned down the lamp, stuffed the bundles, notes, letters, and all, into his pocket, and stepped out stealthily and disappeared.

An hour or so afterwards, Johnny moved uneasily, moaned and grunted in his sleep, discovered that the edge of the table was sharp, and his neck stiff; then he opened his eyes, and lifted his head, feeling a little cold and somewhat cramped from the position in which he had been lying.

Pretty well awake now, he slowly rose and tried to shake himself together. Then he remembered something.

"Colonel!" he said hoarsely.

There was no reply.

"Colonel's asleep," he whispered. "Less go to bed."

He threw himself into the bunk and drew the blankets over him, without the usual preliminary of undressing. As soon as he was quite comfortable, he addressed himself to sleep, but first, as a matter of custom, he felt in the right-hand corner for the recess in which he kept his bundles. Very odd; he could not find them. They were not there.

In a moment, he was broad awake, and perfectly sober. On his knees he began to fumble and feel everywhere for his treasures. Then he sprang out of bed, crying, "Colonel! Colonel! wake up!" and groped about for his matches. When he had found them, still wondering why the Colonel slept so heavily, he lit the lamp, and searched again for his packets. But in vain. They were gone. Then he looked for his guest, and he was gone too.

Then he understood what had happened, and seizing his gun with a loud cry, the robbed man ran wildly out into the road, and rushed along the track southward. That was a great pity, because the Colonel, who felt quite safe and easy in his mind, and was not making any violent effort to cover the ground quickly, was marching due north.

CHAPTER II. ON THE RIVER LEA.

THE River Lea is honourably known among fellows of the Royal Geographical Society, schoolboys who go in for their prize, and the makers of maps, as forming the eastern boundary of Middlesex. It is not, however, a river which goes into society, like a certain other river which runs along the south of the same county. This is to be accounted for in several ways: first, because society is a good long way off; next, because you cannot get at the East of London except from Broad Street, which is not a society station; next, on account of what may be called the personal character of the river. Its mouth is respectable, but homely, and a good deal encumbered, though of a lordly breadth at high-tide, with barges, lighters, works, and wharves. Higher up, it shows a sad want of directness and purpose; it winds about among the low meadows and marshes without ever making a bold push among such unresisting material; it continually goes off into three or four channels; for a large part of its course the prospect on one bank at least always terminates with a row of low cottages, built of grey brick with red roofs. Even the Thames at Cliveden could not maintain its dignity against that

mean endless row of small grey houses and red roofs.

Yet the river is regarded with passionate fondness by all who dwell between Stratford and Hertford. For you may fish in it all the year round; and you may row upon it for nine months in the year; you may bathe in it for three months in the year; and you may get drowned in it, and very often do, if you happen to be upset and cannot swim. On half-holidays and on summer evenings, there are as many boats upon it as on the Thames at Richmond. There is also to be found upon its banks the Riverside Jack, a creature whom, at first, it seems incongruous to meet so far east. The ignorant traveller would as soon expect a salmon in the River Lea as a Jack like him of Putney, Richmond, Chertsey, and Kingston, upon its banks. Yet here he is; using his favourite language with the one favourite adjective which goes with everything, like the Spanish onion, or curry-powder, or Soyer's Universal Sauce; patriotically drinking the national beverage; loafing about among the boats; always pretending to be extremely busy, yet never doing anything, and still a waiter—"he also serves, who only stands and waits"—upon Providence for the casual tip; his expectations being pitched lower than those of his Richmond cousins. The Lea River Jack has a cottage upon the bank, green with damp in the winter and picturesque with dirt in the summer; behind the cottage is a garden in which he grows the most gigantic Jerusalem artichokes—perhaps that vegetable, in some subtle, unknown way, appeals to a poetic side, hitherto unsuspected, in his nature: here and there he has a ferry-boat, in which he will take you across for a penny. Whether business is brisk or slack, he always has a rod or two in the water, and as he goes about his chores, he still keeps one eye upon the float, ready at a moment's notice to strike the silver roach.

If you were to ascend the river from the mouth, where it is called Bow Creek, beside the East India Dock, you would pass, on your left, wharves, gasworks, and mankind, all the way by Bromley, Bow, and Stratford, till you came to Clapton; and all the way upon the right you would have a broad and dreary flat, which has many names, but is one swamp—the Great Dismal Swamp—once, I believe, and up to the days of Henry the Eighth, who loved hunting in Epping and Hainault, and thereabout, full of alligators, snapping turtles, and

Wantley Dragons, or at least the Sussex kind, which were smaller. No one must contemplate this swamp too long, or on many days, except when there is a sunny sky above, with a west wind driving light clouds about, making alternations of light and shade.

It is not, I think, until one gets to Clapton that the stream becomes possible for those who are affected by their surroundings; above that point it is a real river, which may be rowed upon or fished in, and enjoyed as much as any other river in England, though with more moderate raptures. It is not so picturesque as the Wye, for instance; nor so bright as the southern Avon; nor so dashing as the Usk; nor so pleasing as the Tyne; nor so lovely as the Coquet; but yet it pleases.

It was on the evening of Thursday, the 28th of June in the present year of grace, 1883, that among other boats upon the River Lea, was one—the only one with which we are concerned—containing two persons. Had these two persons been old, or even middle-aged, nobody would have noticed them; but as they were both young, and one was not only young, but very pleasing for the eye to rest upon, people on the bank looked after them as the boat sped on her way. As for the evening, it was exactly the sort of evening which this homely river wants to set off its simple beauty; the wind was from the west and blew in gusts, but not too heavily; the clouds scudded across the sky, the air was clear; there was a lively ripple in the water, and a pleasant lapping and plashing of the water among the tall rank grass which serves the Lea at this part in place of reeds and water-lilies. The river was quite full and brimming over, but the girl who sat in the stern and held the rudder-strings could not see the flat marshy fields, because of this tall grass standing in the red clay of the low bank. When the sun got a chance between the impertinent clouds, the wavelets were blue and bright, and sparkled and danced merrily, like bubbles in a glass of champagne, or zoedone at the very least; so that it did one good only to see them. When a flying cloud hid the sun, and the wind came down upon the water, it became inky-black, and the little billows were as threatening as if they had been great waves, and the girl's eyes fell instinctively upon the young man with her, as if for protection. This was quite natural, because he was her lover. Any girl would have done the same.

As for her appearance, I declare that there was nothing at all out of the common in her face; and yet she was very far from being common. Women said of her that she was rather pretty, in their cold and critical way; young men would have found her charming, but she only knew one or two. I have seen thousands of such pretty, sweet-faced English girls, with the seal of goodness and tenderness on their foreheads; you may see them in any town of this happy realm wherever girls do congregate, that is to say, in church or at evening parties—whether most they love their prayers or their waltzing is a question which I leave to philosophers—they are as plenty as blackberries, and yet, though so plenty, they are so very precious. This girl, Milly Montoro, was nineteen, or perhaps twenty; of her beauty it is enough to say that it was entirely conformable to the ideal of this present year, which, among other things, likes its damsels to be tall rather than petites, and perhaps prefers a brunette to a blonde. This evening she was perfectly happy; she had all she wanted: love, and plenty of it; youth, health, strength, hope, a modest sufficiency—what can girl desire more? She was so happy that she felt in a way ashamed, and afraid of showing her happiness too much, lest George should think her silly—which indeed she was not. She was so happy that she did not care much about talking, and would have been contented to go on watching river, and sky, and bank, and the face of her lover before her, without a word; she was so happy, in short, that she felt as if all the rest of the world must needs be as happy as herself; and the golden age with Roger Bontemps; the Ship which is bound to come home, but is always overdue; the Home of Plenty; the Land of Cockaigne; the Garden of Delight, and the Paradise of Sweet Contentment, were all come together, most unexpectedly, and had every intention of staying, and never going away again at all! A blissful dream, truly! Happy those who fail not of it once in their lives.

Along the bank there sat rows of anglers. On the Lea they are of all ages. The angler, like the poet and the æsthete, is born, not made; some upon the bank were old, old men, seventy, eighty, ninety years of age. Charles Lamb, fifty years ago, used to see them in the same place, fishing with the same rod, after the same roach. Others were middle-aged men, whose work in the City, though necessary,

was irksome, because it kept them from the banks; others were young men, but thoughtful and reflective, who sit every evening, rod in hand, in grave silence and patience, while their frivolous compeers in cruelty collars and tight trousers, go a-mashing; others, again, were mere boys and striplings yet, already bound for life to the brotherhood, though no oaths or secret mysteries of initiation and reception were offered or required. Milly pitied them a little this evening; it certainly did seem to her that men at every time of life would be better employed in making love than in fishing.

"Oh, George," she leaned forward and murmured low, "do the young men never leave the banks and look for some girl, to make her happy?"

"You would like everybody to be happy," said her lover, resting on his oar. "Why, my darling, it is not every girl who can make every man happy. Do you think any other girl in the world would have made me happy?"

If you think of it there seems a little arrogance and self-conceit in this little speech; but the young man did not intend it. What he meant was, that not every girl has the power of making the happiness of even an average, ordinary, typical, commonplace young man such as himself; he was quite a humble young man in his own estimation. He designed to pay a high compliment to his betrothed, because, so lofty being the ideal woman even in the most commonplace manly bosom, Milly Montoro alone, of all the women he had ever seen, reached this giddy height. She understood him to mean this, and she blushed and lowered her eyes, being afraid for herself lest she might fail in this point or in that, and so have to come down to a lower step, whereby she might imperil the affections she had won.

The early days of courtship are, to an innocent maid, as the steps of one who walks with trembling feet upon frozen snow, doubting the assurance of the guide who has gone before, and assures her that all is safe; going delicately, fearfully, pit-a-pat, softly feeling the strength of the treacherous surface, until, quite assured that it is safe indeed, the traveller may walk in ease and happiness. The very peril, however, lends excitement and pleasure to the journey.

So the girl listened, and her heart glowed within her to hear these words; and yet she was afraid. Is it not a

delightful thing to feel, for once in a life, that you are a real angel, wanting nothing but a couple of wings, and bound to play up to the part, and to scorn the little temperous tiffs, sharp sayings, unworthy thoughts, with which some girls, not yet fully assured that they belong to the holy army of angels, do poison and corrupt their minds?

"Oh, George," she murmured, "do not spoil me, or you will be disappointed afterwards. Let us talk of our future."

The young man, at the invigorating thought of the future, grasped his sculls with firmer hands, and put his back into half-a-dozen strokes, so that the little craft, astonished, and a little hurt in her feelings and rowlocks, clove the waters at racing speed.

I am firmly fixed in the opinion, and am prepared to maintain it in open tourney, lance in rest, and buckler (especially buckler) on arm, that the whole hope of the country in the future, its mainstay in the present, its glory in the past, lies, will lie, and has always lain, in those boys who do not distinguish themselves, or show any enthusiasm over the subjects which we commonly call *literæ humaniores*, or *belles lettres*—in other words, who do not "take to books," but prefer the carpenter's-shop, the lathe, the Zoological Gardens, the natural history of birds, beasts, fishes, and men; who want always to find out how things are done, with what tools and methods, and then are never satisfied until they can see their way to improve those methods; whose heaven upon this earth is a chemical and physical laboratory; who really cannot be made to care for poetry—unless there is a rattling good story in it—or for a story unless it is real, full of adventure, and the fellow who wrote it knew what he was talking about; who have no feeling for style and no taste for the rhythm of verse, the fine aroma of an essay, the balance of a period, the pointing of an epigram. That those who do—bookish men—exist at all seems to those, who do not, chiefly due to the necessity for keeping printers occupied. But what a waste of life it appears compared with that which is wholly given over to practical contrivances, making easy what has hitherto proved hard, and cheap what has hitherto been dear. George Ambrose was one of the practical men. Look at him as he handles his sculls, with bare head and up-rolled sleeves. You see that he has a clear steady eye, clean-cut features, a mouth set firm, and a square

chin. These are all indications pointing in the same direction. As a boy, when other boys read books, he made things, or enquired into causes. When it became time for him to leave school, he requested that he might not be sent into the City, whither all his schoolfellows were bound, but might find a place, if it were only as door-keeper, in some establishment where they made things. His request was granted, because in the lower valley of the Lea such a request is recognised as not only reasonable but as likely to lead unto things substantial. The only difficulty with a young man is to choose, for there are at Stratford, West Ham, Hackney Wick, yea, and at Clapton itself, men running many and divers trades, arts, and industries—those who spin jute, make cigar-boxes, creosote, patent fuel, dye, tanks, crucibles, grease, chicory, drain-pipes; with workers in glass, iron, leather, stone, lead, gelatine, tin, zinc, and xylonite; and money to be made in all these trades did one know how to choose the most likely. Young Ambrose made two or three false starts. First, he entered the works of a gas company, but speedily mastered the subject, and despised a thing in which the amount of knowledge required is so limited. Next, he went into a galvanised iron company, but pined for still wider scope, and finally began afresh at the bottom of the ladder in a great chemical company, which had to do with a whole group of things, every one of inexhaustible interest. He was now twenty-six years of age; he had worked his way up to a good salary and highly responsible work; he had taken his degree in science at the university in Piccadilly; he was a member of the Chemical Society; he had written papers and was already known; and he was so full of ambitions, projects, designs, hopes, and plans, that it was impossible for him to remain any longer alone, but needs must that he take a wife. Whom should he take but the girl he had known for a dozen years, who lived with his own cousin, Reginald Ambler—the best and sweetest of girls, and eke the prettiest? He, who had thought for ten years of nothing but the laboratory at the works, his experiments, his science, and his reading, discovered suddenly that he had always been in love with Milly Montoro, and when he proposed to her, which he did with as much eloquence, yet fear and trembling, as if he had been a poet of the first water, he told her so, and ascribed not to himself, but to her, all the merit.

"Milly dear," he said, after throwing his excitement into the boat, "the house is perfect; no basement, no kitchen below, two rooms on the ground-floor, three above—nobody can want more. It's only two miles from Stratford and one from the river, where we shall like to take a row now and then. As to the garden, you shall have the front for your flowers, and I shall have the back for peas and beans. On Saturday afternoons I will look after it."

"Yes, George, and I will look after it every day. Go on. You will start every morning at half-past eight. Yes, I know, breakfast at half-past seven; but you will be home to tea by seven every evening. George, we must make our evenings delightful. Sometimes you shall read to me; I will play for you; I will teach you to sing; you have got a very good voice, sir, only you want to be taught how to keep it in order. On Sundays we will go to church together—no more reading chemistry on Sunday mornings—and after church a little walk, and then dinner. Think of having you to dinner every Sunday! After dinner I shall send you for a long walk to shake the cobwebs out of your brain, and you shall come home to tea and supper. Perhaps we may have one or two of the children to tea with us; and, George, we will furnish the spare room, so as to give a bed to them sometimes, will we not? They are as good as my brothers and sisters, you know, and——"

"You mean you have been as good as a sister to them, Milly," he laughed. "Yes, you shall have your spare room, and put as many of the children into the bed as the bed will hold. My dear, I do not want you to lose your friends."

"No, George." The tears stood in her eyes for a moment, but soon cleared away. "It is bad enough for them, poor dears, as it is. They have been crying ever since it was fixed for August."

George showed no kind of sympathy with these poor sufferers, knowing that their loss was his own gain. This feeling very much helps to harden the heart; and, besides, he was ready to explain, if necessary, that every girl must expect to exchange her home for her husband, and to point out that it was not as if the young Amblers had any real claim upon Milly, who was neither kith nor kin, but had only lived with them for eight years or so; and the fact that they regarded her as their elder sister did not make her one, but showed

only the extraordinary goodness of her disposition, seeing that she could command an amount of affection as can only be wrung from the unsympathetic breasts of the young by extraordinary sacrifice and ceaseless devotion. These thoughts passed through his brain quickly, but without requiring him to put them into words. So he only looked at his fiancée and nodded his head, and she understood just as well as if he had talked a whole yard, or an ell or two, of printed slips.

Then the young chemist began to talk of his own schemes, which it would be a shame to reveal, because he is in reality another Edison, only as yet his plans have not become patents. He knew all the things which want to be invented or made practicable through being made cheap, with the inventions which want to be converted from toys to practical purposes, and the possibilities of certain scientific facts which are as yet in the limbo of unpractical laboratories. Heavens! what extended openings, chances, opportunities, and occasions there are for the young chemist who has got eyes that look outside his retort and can connect his laboratory with humanity!

"You shall find out all the things that have to be found out, George," cried Milly, as if every woman has the power of conferring genius, insight, conception, and more power to his elbow upon the man she loves. And yet not every woman, my friends; but unto some women is this power given, and then happy—thrice happy—is he whom that woman loves. The powers of women are as yet imperfectly known, which is one reason why they sometimes try to imitate man; and I wish I could be born a hundred years hence, when these powers are understood and developed, and be clever, strong, handsome, frisk, and frolic. Then would a great career await me. Perhaps—who knows?

"Oh," he went on, "when one thinks of the wonderful world which is opening out all round us; the instruments which register speech so that it can never be lost—fancy, Milly, all one's foolish words preserved for ever—the little machine with which a scene is caught in a moment and so never lost; the wire which sends messages, and the wire which whispers words; the unknown forces which our great men are reducing to order and obedience, so that before many years the reign of steam, and gas, and coal will be at an end. It seems as if there was nothing

else worth living for, and everything outside the laboratory was a sham and a delusion, except the school which prepares the boys for the workshop."

"And me, George," said Milly jealously. "Am I not worth living for? Tell me all that is in your thoughts always. I know nothing of your science, but you shall teach me. Promise that you will tell me everything."

"My dear," he replied, "that is the reason why I want you to marry me, because I must talk to some one."

Again, he did not mean to be selfish, yet he might have seemed so; but he had never learned the language of compliment, and he meant that to Milly it was an honour that he should think her able to understand and to share his thoughts; and all, just as before, because he was a humble youth, who felt himself to be quite of the ordinary kind, but educated, which Milly was not, only that she belonged to the nobler kind of women who could, he thought, understand everything without education. Indeed, one knows hundreds of women who do, and will sit out the most scientific lecture, bristling with hard words, their faces as full of intelligence at the end as at the beginning; and I do not for a moment believe the wicked calumny which accuses them of abstracting their thoughts at the very beginning, and so remaining during the whole discourse.

Then he, in his turn, listened while Milly told him her thoughts, but bashfully, being afraid lest, after the great ambition of her lover, her own hopes might seem to him small. Yet they were not, because they were nothing short of an ardent desire to possess her life with ease, love, and happiness, and her soul with comfort. No woman can desire more, so that, in fact, Milly was most ambitious. It is true that almost every girl permits herself the same dream. While they talked, the sun went down, and a light mist rose upon the low ground and spread over the river. Then they turned, and George rowed gently down stream, the water plashing at the bows.

"George," said Milly presently, "I am thinking of my father."

"Why," he replied, "it is four years since you heard from him. He must be dead, long ago."

"Yes," she sighed; "else he would never have forgotten me. I will show you some of his letters. They are full of love and thought for me. He must be dead—

my poor father! And to think that he never saw me since I was a child in arms. He was only a clerk in the City, you know; and suddenly he resolved to go abroad and make his fortune, which shows what a courageous spirit he had. But no one ever thought he would have done so splendidly."

"No one ever knows," said George, "what he can do, until he is put upon his mettle. Yet he must have been a determined and clever man. Because, you see, Milly, if fortunes are to be made in America, the Americans are generally sharp enough to keep them in their own hands. At the same time, very often people do not see what lies at their feet. What did he go away for? Because I am quite sure a clever man can do quite as well at home."

"Can he?" asked Milly. "I thought that everybody who goes to America makes a great fortune."

"That is what they hope to do beforehand. When they are there, I believe they find life as hard, and money as scarce, as it is at home. There is a clerk in the accountant's office at the works who remembers your father. Says nobody ever thought much of his cleverness; says he was a lazy, easy sort of chap, who did his work and went home, and was happy. No one ever could understand why he threw up a good place and went away."

"Yet," said Milly, "my father said once in his letters that America offers such a vast field for a man that his money can be invested as fast as it is made. Sometimes he spoke of millions."

"Why, dear," said her lover, "if these millions could be found! They must be somewhere; but I am afraid they have got into the wrong hands; what splendid works we would put up! Oh, Lord!" he sighed heavily. "What a laboratory we could have with a million to spend on it. Think of the electric batteries! What experiments we could direct, and what an army of workmen we could employ!"

"It would be too delightful, George," Milly replied, kindling in sympathy. "You should be the greatest man in Stratford. But my poor father is dead, and as for his fortune, that must be all gone and scattered."

I think she imagined her father's fortune to consist of dollars tied up in sacks. But we know otherwise.

"If," he said, "your father's money was

invested, the investments must be somewhere and the papers in somebody's hands. Unless, that is, people stole them and forged his signature. There must be all kinds of mortgages, shares, leases, contracts, bonds, all sorts of things. Unless, again—money got easily is as easily lost—the speculations proved disastrous. Come, my dear; never think of your father's fortune. We shall never see any of it. Why, with my three hundred a year and your hundred and fifty, we shall begin twice as well off as most young married people. And of course I shall get a rise; not to speak of the great things we shall do presently. And here we are. Steady, steady. Let me get out first."

They walked along the lane, between the river and the road. Milly turned back to look at the river when they reached the higher ground.

The romantic suburb of Upper Clapton stands upon a terrace, like Richmond, and overlooks the broad valley of the Lea; gardens lie on the gentle slope of the low hill, and beyond these you can discern the river winding about among the flat meadows; beyond the meadows, again, are the hills and wooded inclines of Walthamstow, Woodford, and Chingford; beyond these (but you cannot see it) is Epping Forest.

"See," said Milly, "how white and strange the meadows look with the mist upon them, and how shadowy the marshes lie beyond it. And look! did you ever see a moon so big and dim?"

"A sign of rain," said George the practical.

"George," said the girl, shivering, "I feel afraid. Give me your hand. How strong it is! If there was any danger I should always have this strong hand, shouldn't I?"

He kissed her—no one was in the lane, and it was twilight and misty beside—he kissed her twice, on her forehead and her lips, saying:

"Why, dear, what danger can there be? And if there were?" He clenched his fist and his eyes looked dangerous. "Come, my darling. It is past nine o'clock, and the Great Discoverer will be getting hungry. To say nothing of Kepler, Copernica, and Tycho Brahe."

CHAPTER III. IS THE WORLD ROUND?

SUPPER was laid in the dining-room of Veritas Villa waiting for the return of Milly and her lover. I call it the dining-

room, but it was also the breakfast-room, the sitting-room, the day-nursery, the play-room, the work-room, and my lady's boudoir; not because there were not other rooms in this genteel villa, but because the drawing-room was wanted for Mr. Ambler's maps and books, and the breakfast-room, which opened conveniently upon the garden, for his observatory, his models, his Orrery, his telescope, and his scientific instruments. If you belong to a great man you must be content to let him have all the comfort. There are so few great men that this law causes little hardship. Besides, who would not willingly give up two out of three rooms for the pride of being an Ambler?

The boys, this evening, were shaping bows—that is to say, they were making things with knives—boys who never have any pocket-money are greatly to be envied, because they learn to make so many things for themselves; and the girls were spinning. That is to say, Copernica Ambler, the only girl in the room, was finishing a frock for her sister Somerville, now in bed and asleep, while her mother, with a great basket beside her, which never grew less in bulk, was looking after the stockings and the socks, darning-needle in hand. Across her face lay the line of care which marks the face of the woman who has to make every shilling do the work of half-a-crown, and contrives, manages, and continually occupies her mind with the maintenance of her children. Who does not know such women by the score? It seems a waste of life, this giving it all to the boys and girls; but perhaps it is made up somehow—here or hereafter.

When Milly came home, followed by her lover, there was a general stir, with the sudden appearance of smiles and revival of cheerfulness, due partly to the immediate prospect of supper, and partly as the toll of affection exacted at all hours by this young person. For the mother looked up and smiled over her pile of stockings; and Copernica, who was a sharp-featured thin girl of sixteen, and wore spectacles, held up her newly-finished skirt for admiration; and the boys shouted; and every one called upon Milly for sympathy with his work; and everybody had something to tell her, which was always the way when she came home, whether she had been away for an hour or a day.

"You must be hungry, George," said Mrs. Ambler. "Tycho, my dear, go call your father."

Everybody, or nearly everybody, knows Reginald Ambler by reputation; a very large class of humanity, namely, the Editors, know his handwriting, and cruelly toss his communications into the basket unread; few, comparatively, have the advantage of his personal acquaintance. He is a man now about fifty years of age; he is rather tall and thin, his hair, gone grey, lies over his forehead in a great mass, which he is always pushing back; his eyes are large and full; they are also of a light blue colour, so that his face seems at first furnished with too much eye. When he is in repose, the eyes have a far-off look; when he is talking, they are quick and eager. His lips are nervous and his fingers are restless. Columbus, one thinks, must have been a good deal like Mr. Reginald Ambler. As for his manner, it varies with every hour, ranging from the depth of despondency—when an article has been rejected or a letter treated contemptuously—to the height of confidence, hope, and happiness—when he has begun another or has trapped some unfortunate into a controversy. And he has never been known to engage in any other subject of conversation, or think upon any other matter whatever, except his Great Discovery.

To-night he came to the supper-table and sat down with a smile of welcome.

"Milly, my child," he said, "take your place beside me. George, you next to her, of course. Copernica, my dear, this side of me. Galileo, fill George's glass. Cut some bread, Tycho, my boy. Kepler, some cheese for Milly and your sister. So——" He rubbed his hands and looked round upon his boys with the simple pride of a father, though he was so great a man. "Ptolemy and Mary Somerville have gone to bed, I suppose?"

"This day," he went on, "will be a remarkable day in my history. I have noted it in the Autobiography. Children, I have now laid down the last of the great voyages round the world completely on the map. It threatened to be troublesome at first, but it agrees, I find—of course I expected nothing less—with my anticipations in every particular!"

"Oh, father!" Copernica clapped her hands. The wife smiled, her mind being still full of the socks in the basket. Milly nodded and laughed. The boys alone said nothing. Boys, if you come to think of it, never understand a father's greatness. Many great men have lamented this to me.

speaking confidentially. "Oh, father!" cried Copernica, "what will they say now?"

"They will say, my daughter, what they always do say. The Fellows of the Geographical Society will sneer; the Editors of scientific journals will refuse to listen; comic writers will make jokes upon it; map-makers and globe-makers will try to hide the truth; and the rest of the world, like George here, will pass it over without paying any attention."

"If it were something in the chemical line," said George, "I would listen; as it is not, I have not time for it."

This he said out of subtlety and duplicity, because in his secret soul he jeered at the Great Discovery.

"No, no; and thus it is," said the Philosopher, "that the greatest discoveries steal upon the world, and those who make them are unheeded. I have now laid down upon the map the route of every great voyager; my distances, my time, agree with his! Show me the globe-geographer who has ever attempted the like. Yes, my work is done; the chain of evidence is complete; I can at any moment, if I should be called away, leave the work of my life to the judgment of posterity. As for my contemporaries, they may, if they choose, continue to class me with the crack-brained enthusiasts——"

"Oh, father," said Copernica.

"—who think they can square the circle, find out the site of Paradise——"

"I wish I could go and look in at the gate," said Milly.

"—and transmute metals."

"That would be only changing the currency," said George.

The boys were steadily eating. They had heard this talk before.

"As for meeting me on a platform," Mr. Ambler continued, "they remember the victory over Bagshott, and tremble."

Bagshott was a Baptist minister who once ventured on a public controversy with Mr. Ambler, and had his head knocked into a cocked hat, a thing quite improper for a minister of the Gospel to wear, and recanted, and was now a fervent disciple.

"As for admitting at once and peacefully that I am right, and they themselves, therefore, wrong, that is, I suppose, too much to expect of anyone, especially of men who live by the propagation of error."

"A great deal too much," said George.

The boys went on with their supper and said nothing. The two elder lads.

Tycho Brahe and Kepler, arrived at the dignity of clerkery, had long since plainly understood, and now made no secret of their opinion, that a Great Discovery may be a most calamitous thing for a family. Palissy, himself, did not bring a more rooted antipathy to fame into his home-circle than their father. Honour and glory are very fine things indeed; meantime, when they are abstract qualities, and therefore unproductive, and the heels of your boots are down, they might be sold, if there were any purchaser, for whatever they would fetch in the rough.

"Better, far better," thought Tycho, "for my father to care nothing at all about honour, but a good deal about making money, and saving it or using it to push his boys."

Such a father he would have desired, red of cheek, important in his bearing, pompous in his talk, as might be seen every day on Stamford Hill; a father who could put his sons into good houses, buy them partnerships, give them holidays at the seaside, with—oh, all the things for which these lads vainly longed.

Reginald Ambler is nothing less, if you please, than the Discoverer of the great truth that the world, so far from being a round ball, thoughtfully flattened at the north and south, so as to prevent the ice from slipping down and spoiling the equator, is really, as can be demonstrated with ease, a great flat circular disc of unknown thickness. What we call the Arctic Pole, believing that the world twirls perpetually and ignominiously round it, like a fat goose upon the spit, is in fact a central circle of ice and snow, the origin and cause of which must be left for the discovery of future philosophers; round it is the temperate zone; beyond this the torrid zone; beyond this again another great temperate circle, in which Australia, the Cape of Good Hope, and New Zealand are comfortably placed; "neither hot nor cold," as the Scot said. Outside this vast temperate zone, the ocean lies, a tract of sea indeed, immeasurable, desolate, without land or sail. Spread round in another, and the last, great circle, beyond the ocean at the outer-edge is a Rim, ledge, hedge, barrier, frontier-mark, boundary-wall, or whatever the inadequacy of language permits us to call it, of thick, solid, mountainous ice. How broad is this Rim, whether it stretches out for ever into boundless space, whether it is narrow, so that perhaps some day the voyager may

hope to reach its limit, and to peep over into infinity, no one can at present say. From time to time ships, which have sailed south, have reported cliffs, rocks, and mountains, ice-bound, covered with snow, inaccessible, inhospitable, without life. Nothing lives in this boundary Rim except, upon the edge of it, a few seals, walrus, narwhals, sword-fish, polar bears, whales, and such sea monsters, who do not know how miserable they are. As for men there are none at all, and will be none till time shall be no more.

"What is beyond the Rim," said Reginald modestly, "I cannot say any more than the globe-professors can tell you what is beyond the farthest star."

This improved kind of earth requires an entirely new disposition of the heavens.

Reginald, quite early in the history of his Discovery, remembered this, and constructed, with infinite pains, a beautiful Orrery. In this, the sun, no longer an immense globe of fire ninety millions of miles away, or thereabouts, but a comfortable little fireplace, so to speak, half-a-dozen miles above the world, went round and round above the great circle of the torrid zone, wobbling to north or south so as to produce summer and winter. He pulled a string, and you saw the daily and the annual motion most clearly set forth. The moon and planets in the same way went on what seemed to be recklessly independent and dangerous paths of their own, and the fixed stars went round the polar star continually. By an ingenious adjustment of bars, eccentrics, and curves, he accounted for all the natural phenomena—except one. This exception came home to him sometimes in the dead of night, and took the conceit out of him. He had never been able to account for lunar eclipses. Why not lunar eclipses? It is too much to say that his faith ever wavered, but he was worried and rendered unhappy when he remembered that his Orrery would account for everything except a lunar eclipse. But those moments, happily, were rare. Mostly he was content to gaze upon his model with a perfect satisfaction, to show enquirers over and over again how, upon a flat and stationary earth, all the natural phenomena, morning, noon, and evening, with the four seasons, the phases of the moon, the winter's downward slope, and the summer's elevation of the sun, can all be explained and accounted for.

Naturally he became one of the bug-bears—there are always half-a-dozen living

at the same time—of the scientific world. He wrote to all the papers, journals, transactions, and reports of the learned bodies; he offered to lecture, he asked for an hour—only one short hour; he sent his name with the offers of a paper, to the British Association, to the Social Science Congress, to the Balloon Society, to the Church Congress, to the Oriental Congress, to the Congress of Librarians, to the Congress of Head-masters, to the Geographical Society, the Geologists, the Society of Arts, the Physical Society, the Royal Astronomical Society, the Young Men's Christian Institute, the Sunday School Union, the Church Missionary Society, the Open-Air Mission, the Salvation Army, the Eleusis Club, the Grand Lodge of Freemasons, and the Congress of Cathedral Vergers, not once, but every year, offering to read a paper, show his maps and models, and reconstruct the geography and shape of the world. It is sad to relate that no one paid the least attention to these proposals, and, being now fifty years of age, and with many years' experience, he had ceased to expect a hearing from these learned bodies, any more than he expected admission into the Times, Standard, Daily News, Morning Post, Daily Telegraph, and Daily Chronicle, of the letters which he regularly sent them all once every year, after six months of preparation. As for the monthly, weekly, and quarterly journals, he had tried them all. They would have none of him. And as for eminent men of science, there was not a single mathematician at Cambridge, or a professor of science in any university or college of the United Kingdom to whom he did not propose a meeting, public or private, to discuss his theories. The signal victory already alluded to, which he achieved over the Rev. Mr. Bagshott, Baptist minister of Hackney Wick, in a public discussion held at the chapel, was an abiding proof of his strength in advocacy and the goodness of his cause.

The school is small—it consists really of two, the Prophet himself and Bagshott, but it is full of zeal. They have an office, and an office-boy, in Chiswell Street. The office is a second-pair back; the office-boy, whose hours are from nine to six, spends his time chiefly in the street surveying mankind; the publications—tracts and maps—of the society are on sale there, but no one has ever bought a copy except a journalist, who once saw his way to a scoffing article on the subject, and so bought

everything there was, and put the things in his pocket-book and went away, and presently forgot all about it. In fact, there exists a general conspiracy against the Truth.

"Astronomers," said Mr. Ambler, "tremble at mention of my name for fear, but pretend to smile in scorn. They hope their system will last at least their own time, forgetting that to be found out after death will be more fatal to their reputation than to yield in life. In my autobiography will be found not only the 'Short Reasons' but also the 'Argument at Length,' and the 'Questions' which I have sent to every one of them demanding a reply, a platform, a public discussion, or an opportunity to state my views. Not one of them has given me either. It will, indeed," he added, with a lofty sneer, "be greatly to the credit of the Universities, in the next century, that they refused even to let me speak."

It was in this house that Milly was placed when the death of her mother left her alone at ten years of age. The reasons why Mr. Reginald Ambler was chosen for her guardian were unusual, but not without precedent. He had a cousin—many people have cousins; this cousin, Richard Ambler, a practical Ambler, an unimaginative Ambler, was a solicitor. Richard Ambler, therefore, on being asked by the child's relations—they were unnatural relations, descended by the parent's side from a certain illustrious uncle of two—who wanted to put the burden of the little girl on somebody else's shoulders, and to find a home and a guardian for a child whom nobody wanted, naturally considered first of all which of his own friends would find the money most useful, and seeing that among all his friends and cousins no one was so perfectly hopeless, impecunious, and unpractical as Reginald the Discoverer, and few so poor, sent her to him; not for any fitness or special aptitude which Reginald possessed for the task of guardian, but wholly and solely that the child's money, which now amounted to a hundred and eighty pounds a year—house property having gone up—might be paid yearly to Reginald for the good of himself and his household. They were kind-hearted people, and as Milly was a willing, clever kind of child, they were easily, though gradually, persuaded to let her become governess, nurse, assistant-housekeeper, maker of puddings and pies, milliner, dressmaker, chaplain, adviser, counsellor, and eldest

sister to the family. "And, oh, my dear," said Mrs. Ambler, when Milly's engagement began, "what we should have done without you nobody knows; and what we are going to do without you nobody can tell."

Milly's life was so busy that she never understood how dull it would seem to any one outside the house, for there were in it no amusements, no sights, no theatre, no concerts, no opera, no pictures, and even very few novels; nor perceived that she ought to have been treated differently, nor comprehended that her guardian was regarded by everybody as a lunatic with a harmless craze; nor knew or suspected that there were any enjoyments to be had in life other than those within her reach, namely, the children in good temper and looking nice, the Sunday church, a summer evening walk, and the daily cup of tea. She was, however, distinguished above all her contemporaries of Clapton Common by the possession of a romantic history. She was the daughter of a man who had made a most Glorious Fortune. Everybody knew so much. Nobody knew what the Fortune actually was, either in amount or in form, whether it was silver, oil, hogs, or railways; whether it had been acquired by rings and corners, by bulling and bearing, by lying, treachery, and deceit, by contracts, by plunder and pillage of the public money, or in any of the many ways in which many tempt fortune and a few succeed, winning thereby the universal respect of their fellow-creatures. Mr. Montoro—no one ever spoke of him without the honourable prefix—had been once a clerk in the City. Somewhere about twenty years ago he threw up his place and went away to seek his Fortune. And he found it. Matter of common knowledge that he found it; that he had sent none of it home was also known; and that for four or five years his daughter had heard nothing from him, whence it might be concluded that he was dead. And the great Fortune—where was that? Why, the United States of America being so big, one might as well look for a lost needle in Hyde Park as for a lost fortune in a country popularly believed to consist entirely of men who have made enormous fortunes. No doubt it was lying somewhere packed up, and would be lost for want of someone to claim it. So that Milly was not regarded as an heiress so much as the daughter of a man who had distinguished himself. But still there was always the chance

that her father might turn up, his Fortune in his hand. The thought that her father might be still alive and might yet return never left the girl. She had his letters in her desk, which she read until she knew them by heart, both those to her mother and those to herself. The former were curiously cold and constrained. He was prospering exceedingly, but he did not explain how. He was richer already than any of the people they had known at home; he was waiting an opportunity to realise some of his gains and enable her to keep her carriage; and so on. To herself the letters were full of affection and tenderness, speaking of a time when he would either go home or have his daughter with him. He spoke of his continued success, but without the least hint of his occupation, and his address was always changing; so that whatever it was, his work took him from one State to another.

The girl constructed her ideal father from the letters. He must be a gentle and quiet creature because her mother had always spoken of him as a peaceful man who gave no offence to any, and loved tranquility; yet he must be a man of great courage thus to have forced his way to the front, in a strange country, with no friends to help him. He must be a man of fine manner and noble mind, because his letters were full of the most admirable sentiments, and he must be a father whom any girl would be too ready to love, so full of tenderness was he himself. The letters which this poor English waif and stray wrote twice or three times every year to his daughter were in fact to him, though they were loaded with falsehoods, the one thing which kept up his soul. He consorted with gangs of the roughest; his work was the lowest; yet he had to console him the letters of his child, fresh, innocent, confiding; and he had, to lift himself out of the mire, to make up in reply some answer which should make the girl happy about him; and in order to do that he was forced to imagine himself back in civilised life, a gentleman. If you come to think of it, there wants a good deal of imagination for an unsuccessful emigrant, sunk as low as can well be, to make people at home believe that he is rolling in prosperity. It grew harder every year for the poor man, but still he persevered, until he fell in with his great stroke of luck, and became a landowner in Oregon. Then, his life being now easy, and even assured, and the whiskey-bottle always handy, his

brain began to deteriorate, and he wrote no more letters. While he was a vagrant journeyman, ready to do anything, he would imagine, conceive, and describe. The moment he became settled, the fountain of fancy dried up, and he could picture no more. Therefore, the drop being too great from a millionaire to a settler in a half-cleared plot of forest-ground, with a log-hut and a couple of blankets, he ceased to send any more letters. He was one of those who have been ruined by prosperity. Had he still continued one of a plough-gang, or a herdsman, or a hand on a steamer, or a picker-up of odd jobs, his daughter would have continued to receive those letters which for so many years had been the chief happiness of her life.

But he would come home some day, she said—he would come home.

Thus she grew up a sweet and natural girl, careless of her own beauty, because she was always thinking about the children, till she was past nineteen years of age, and then love came to her in the shape of a brave young fellow—strong, ambitious, obstinately resolved to get on, and quite certain to expect of her in return as much as he would give to her. Then, the practical business of life thus suddenly opened out before her, she left off dreaming about her father, finding henceforth no room for anyone in her dreams except hersweetheart. To be sure, she had known him ever since she had joined the Ambler household, because he was a cousin of Reginald Ambler; but then to see a young fellow occasionally in the house, and to be wooed by him, are very different things. And how that love gradually came about, I am not going to tell, because it is so simple a process that all the world may imagine it. Besides, as the princess said to the one-eyed Calendar, "This is not a common love-story."

Now, on this evening, the supper was, as has been indicated, a meal of unusually cheerful character, not on account of George's presence, because he was there nearly every evening, but for certain unknown and inscrutable reasons which act upon the family atmosphere, and can only be judged by their effects, and make it, in fact, like the climate of this country, variable—sometimes cloudy, sometimes misty, and always impossible to be foretold. Everyone who belongs to a large family must know the uncertainty of the general temper, however that of the indi-

vidual (meaning oneself) may be depended upon. This evening the dining-room of Veritas Villa seemed a little heaven of cheerfulness. Even the two elder boys—Kepler, who was eighteen, and Tycho, who was sixteen—listened to their father without open scorn or impatience, though they had the firmest belief that his talk was unmitigated nonsense. If anyone had held a curved hand to his ear he would probably have heard distinctly a kind of purr of satisfaction and content. Perhaps on a really fine evening in June, when it is light at nine o'clock, and the windows can be kept open, and the roses are already in blossom, everyone ought to be in a good temper. But then fine weather does not always make fine tempers.

"I have never," the Discoverer went on—he had been talking ever since the last remark of his, quoted a few columns back, but we had other things to talk about and have not followed him—"I have never," he was saying, "thought less of a man for being wrong, so long as his mind is open to truth, and he has the courage of his opinions. Thus, I have named the children after those who were my fore-runners, though they did not, it is true, prepare the way for my discoveries, but quite the contrary. Ptolemy, Kepler, Tycho Brahe, Galileo, Copernicus, are names which will always be held in honour, long, long after that of Reginald Ambler has been elevated to the highest place in the roll of honour. This, my children, may not be till after I am dead and gone; yet it will come in the lifetime of some among you. I say no more, but that three letters of enquiry have been received at the Society's offices this week. Already the cause spreads rapidly; but nothing, nothing to the wildfire speed with which it will be taken up when once the people have been allowed to see and judge for themselves."

He drank off a whole glass of beer, paused, meditated for a few moments, with his finger to his forehead, pushed back his hair, and was about to proceed, when there were sounds of wheels in the road, and a ring at the bell of the outer gate. And this was so rare an event—indeed an event hitherto unheard-of—that everybody jumped in his chair and looked at each other.

"It is perhaps another anxious enquirer," said the philosopher. "Can one of the Cambridge professors be going to accept the challenge?"

"It is the Parcels Delivery Company," said Kepler.

"It is Milly's great Fortune," said Copernica, "coming home from America in a box."

"It is——" began another, but stopped, because the door opened and the servant—they had but one—put in her head.

"Please, m'm," she said, "there's a gentleman wants to see Miss Milly."

They looked at each other in something like consternation. A gentleman wanting Milly! What gentleman? Who could it be?

Milly turned very pale, and took George's hand.

"Come with me, George," she said.

"If it is—if it is——" Mrs. Ambler could not say "your father." "Whoever it is, I think, Reginald, as Milly's guardian, you or both of us ought to go with her too."

"Certainly," said Mr. Ambler. "Shall we show him into the map-room? The contemplation of the charts may lead him round——"

"He shall come in here," said the mother, looking round. "Whoever it is, he shall see Milly in the ordinary way, with the children round her, bless her! Kepler, my dear, ask the gentleman to come in."

It was now nearly ten. Outside it was still twilight, but in the room there was a pleasant obscurity. Milly stood at the table, her back to the window, George beside her, holding her hand. Everybody had risen in expectation. The tears were already in Copernica's eyes, and making her spectacles dim out of pure sympathy. The family atmosphere was changed. Calm and serenity were vanished; in their place the beating heart, the quickened pulse, the agitation and oppression which fill the mind before a thunder-storm.

Then the "gentleman" came into the room. In the dim twilight Milly saw a tall figure in the doorway.

"Is there here," he said, "a young lady named Milly Montoro?"

"I am her guardian," replied Mr. Ambler. "My name is Reginald Ambler. I am, as you may be aware, the Discoverer, under Providence, of the true astronomy. Miss Montoro is here. Have you any message or parcel, or—or anything for her?"

"If you will light your gas," said the stranger, "I will tell you."

One of the boys lit the burners. They saw now a gentleman with a heavy brown moustache, no beard or whiskers, strongly

marked features, and eyes very keen, hard, and bright. He was well dressed, and looked as if he was, in City language, a substantial, or "warm" man, yet not in the least like any City man they had ever encountered. He looked round the room, resting his eye first for a moment on Copernica, but, as if dissatisfied with the spectacles, he turned to Milly. Then he stepped forward and held out his hand, saying coldly, "I suppose you are my daughter!"

She sprang forward, and fell into his arms with a cry of surprise and joy. Her father at last!

Her father! Then her Fortune had come home. The boys looked straight before them, with tightness in their throats. Copernica wept silently; the mother wept loudly. Only George seemed discontented.

"My daughter," the stranger repeated coldly, and disengaging himself from her arms without so much as kissing her. "Yes, it is natural after all these years. I suppose I might have expected to be hugged. That will do, Milly. I suppose I must call you Milly. Of course. I was hardly prepared, I must own, Mr. Ambler, for such a—in fact I could not have believed that you were so well-grown a girl. However—yes, my dear, it is your father. You did not expect to see me, perhaps?"

"You have been silent for four long years," she replied. "How could I——"

"True, true; we will talk of that another time. You have been living here, I suppose. And this is Mr. Ambler; and—ah!—Mrs. Ambler; and—ah!—the family Amblers."

"These," said Milly, "are the kind friends, and the boys and girls I have told you of in my letters so often."

"You have, my—my dear." Strange that the adjective should seem so hard to say. "You certainly have. Your letters are all in my pocket at this moment. They have never left me, I assure you."

"Oh, father!"

"Never, my—ahem!—my dear. I have read some of them—ahem!—more than once."

Between having letters always in your pocket and reading them more than once there seems a wide gap.

Milly's eyes dropped.

"Well, my daughter?" He hesitated and looked round. "As it is evening, and a little late, and I have to get back to the

West End, and—and—is there anything you wish to say before I go? Of course we shall meet again to-morrow or next day, or—or—in fact, you will study your own convenience. As regards future arrangements, I do not suppose that I shall go back to America for a few weeks; but of that we can speak afterwards. So, for the present——”

“Stay, father, one moment!” The girl took George’s hand, while the rest looked at each other bewildered. Was this the kind of meeting one would dream of between father and daughter after twenty years’ separation? “This,” said Milly, “is George Ambrose, my lover. We are going to be married.”

Mr. Montoro slowly put up a pair of eye-glasses, and looked at George from head to foot.

“Not so fast,” he said, “not so fast. You have a father, whose permission—— May I ask you, sir, what is your profession?”

“I am at present a clerk in a chemical works,” said George, hot and red.

“A clerk—a mere clerk! My—ahem!—my daughter, we will speak of this afterwards.”

“You were a clerk yourself once,” said George in a quiet rage, while the two elder boys murmured, because they too were clerks.

“What the devil do you mean by that?” asked Mr. Montoro fiercely. “How dare you say that I was once a clerk?”

“If you are ashamed of it,” said George, “I shall certainly not remind you of the fact again. I am not ashamed of beginning as a clerk. Perhaps I shall rise out of it.”

Here was a pretty beginning. Milly looked in consternation from her father to her lover. Why did her father fall into such sudden and violent wrath? Everybody knew he had been a clerk, and had gone away and made his Fortune. However, he recovered as quickly, and deigning no further reply to the unlucky lover turned to his daughter.

“We will talk, Milly,” he said with a coldness of voice which fell upon her heart like ice — “we will talk of these things another time. Meantime I have found out where you live, which is a disgusting distance from anywhere. I shall probably call here again to-morrow afternoon. Meantime——ah!——good-night.”

He gave her his hand without offering to kiss her, and retired without another word.

Mr. Ambler had the presence of mind to follow him and catch him by the arm.

“Pardon me, sir, one word, if only to satisfy the neighbours. Your Glorious Fortune, of which we have heard so much, is it—is it safe? Is all well with it?”

“Quite safe,” Mr. Montoro replied. “It is,” he added with a grin, “just exactly as safe as it always has been—on as sound a basis, and as gigantic. I thought you would want to know first thing about the Fortune. And as to neighbours, be good enough to tell them that I don’t want to know ’em, and I won’t know ’em, and I won’t see ’em. What I am going to do about Milly I cannot just yet tell you; perhaps I have not made up my mind. But hark ye, Mr. Addlepate, or whatever your name is——”

“Ambler, sir—Reginald Ambler, the Discoverer of——”

“Remember, I will have no neighbours here. Perhaps I may have been a clerk myself in the old days. Perhaps I am not too anxious to have them recalled. Keep them out of my way, do you hear?”

He opened the door, walked noisily down the gravel, got into his cab, and drove away.

“Oh, good gracious!” cried Mrs. Ambler. “My poor—poor child! Did anyone ever hear or see such a thing?”

“Oh, poor Milly!” said Copernica, kissing her until the spectacles scratched her cheek.

“But the letters he used to write!” said Milly. “I cannot understand it. What has changed him? Not one kind word! and the letters so full of sweet things! And—oh, George!”

“Never mind me, dear,” said George hoarsely.

“But I must mind you. You are to come first, not my father. He must not upset my life. Yes, I know about the fifth commandment, but that can’t be meant for fathers who stay away twenty years.” She looked determined. “Go now, George, it is getting late. Go, dear, and trust me.”

“I wish,” said Mr. Ambler, “I do wish that he had been shown first into the map-room. If he had understood, even a little, under what a roof his daughter has been brought up, he would have approached the question of—of George—with a little more feeling. I say nothing about the Truth. That may, or may not, come afterwards. He looked as if he might become an Enquirer. But we should have impressed

him first. We did wrong. We should have impressed him first of all, with the maps, the charts, and the working models."

CHAPTER IV. A WARM WELCOME.

AN interval of fifteen years for moral refreshment is a good spell. Unfortunately, whether the time be passed in the neighbourhood of Weymouth, or on Dartmoor, or in the new world, the patient, on his return to society, generally finds that his finer qualities, to remember which has probably been his chief comfort in exile, are all clean forgotten, and only those little episodes which necessitated his departure are now remembered.

The extraordinary vitality of disagreeable things has never yet been treated seriously. A man shall be your most delightful companion for years, your bosom friend and confidant; he then, perhaps, forges your name—only once; steals your money—is only found out once; cheats at cards—and is only once detected; embezzles his employer's money—but is only once discovered, and therefore is compelled to seek retirement for a while. On his return it is excessively annoying to find that nothing is remembered except the misfortune which separated him from his friends.

In a better state of things the patient will be welcomed back as one who has been suffering from some brain disorder, the treatment of which is understood. He will be considered perfectly recovered, and be even ostentatiously trusted with cheques payable to order, bags of gold, and heaps of postal orders; he will be invited to play cards in the most highly moral circles; he will be begged to take care of money belonging to the church, or the neediest widow, or the most helpless orphans, and in every way be made to feel that his disease was completely cured.

This, I am sorry to say, was not the treatment received by the Colonel on his return to England, which followed very shortly after his departure from Oregon. He was in a somewhat delicate position, because he was unable to know how far the reasons of his exile were understood by his old associates. Now, if a man simply disappears and remains a "vanished hand" for a period of years, society has certainly no right to question that man's own version of his story, or to entertain injurious suspicions, or to spread malicious reports. There are many instances on record of such re-appearances, and I have never heard that the adventures related by the

man supposed to have gone under for good have been seriously doubted, whether he declares that he was wrecked on a desert island, married to an Amazon in the heart of the Dark Continent, carried off by friendly gorillas, or compelled to wander among Patagonians, Guachos, and Aztecs. But things are different where nasty stories survive, as the Colonel experienced.

His name, while he was yet in English society, was Percival Brooke West; he was a gentleman by birth, and the only son of his mother, who was a widow. By what extravagances, selfish indulgences, wanton wastings, profligacies, and prodigal-son business, he ran through his patrimony; hardened his heart; deadened his conscience; lost his taste for any pleasures which were not highly flavoured, peppered, and cabob-curried; destroyed the sense of honour, and converted himself into a man-eating tiger, it needs not here to relate, nor need we here even indicate the path by which a plunging youth becomes a profligate and ruined man. Nor need we pause to tell the story of what he did. He "did something" many times, but at the last he was discovered. And then he retired—disappeared, became the "vanished hand" at the card-table, and the "voice that is still" in the smoking-room. The world went on without him, and, for fifteen years, the racecourse, the club, the streets of the West End knew him no longer, and without him the old game went on merrily—the young fellows on the "unlimited chuck," the hawks hovering over the pigeons, and ever and anon another young fellow "doing something" and speedily disappearing.

Then he returned.

Before Mr. Percival Brooke West showed himself in the old haunts—before, in fact, he took passage from New York, he cut off his beard, dyed his hair and moustache brown, and dressed himself in raiment as youthful as a man near fifty, who wishes to pass for five-and-thirty, can venture upon. He took up his quarters in a good Bond Street hotel, and he then considered which of his old friends he should first attempt. Naturally he chose the ones who had been in the same "swim" with himself—that plunging, headlong, exhilarating swim down the rapids, with the beautiful whirlpool at the end, reported to have sucked many a stout swimmer beneath its boiling waters. Had not he himself—?

He remembered seven or eight of the old set and sat down to write to them. The letters were really models. No polite

letter-writer could have taught him more artfully to convey the strength and enduring warmth of his old friendship, his own joy at his return, and his eager looking forward to another meeting. He also contrived to let it be understood that his financial position was extraordinarily sound, and that feasting would come into fashion again.

He forgot that in fifteen years such a set as his would most certainly have fallen all to pieces—first because the pace could not continue, and secondly because many of the men, younger than himself, would leave it in order to enter seriously upon the pursuit of a career. There are really very few who continue in the resolute pursuit of pleasure until past middle life, even though the ashes of the Dead Sea apples have got into their throats and made them cough and choke.

The letters despatched, he walked about the streets waiting for answers. The dear old streets. Heavens! How delightful to be back again among them, even with so moderate a sum as eight hundred pounds to spend! But it would be enough, perhaps, to procure him readmission into the old circles, with such share in the riot of the Fool's Paradise as a man of fifty may look for.

After two days he got one answer—the first and the only one. It was from a dear and old friend, and a follower of his own way of thinking. The writer said that he rejoiced to receive so friendly a letter, because he had long thought he had no friends left at all; that he had been for a good while quite down on his luck, and was now stone broke. But that he had a wife and family to support, and in these his wretched and impoverished circumstances, he knew not where to look even for food for them; that he was ill, moreover, and like to die—with a good deal more to the same effect, concluding with the remark that they had both had misfortunes of the same kind, and ought to feel for each other. ("What the deuce does he mean?" asked the reader.) Wherefore a temporary advance would be most thankfully accepted, and a reply to this note would be expected with the fullest confidence and hope.

I am obliged to own that Mr. Brooke West tore this letter up in a rage.

"Confound the fellow! What did he mean by the 'same misfortune'? Stone broke, was he? Let him starve!"

But there came no more answers to his

letters. Therefore he resolved upon calling on his old friends, though with some misgivings.

"The same misfortune.' What did the impudent beggar and pauper mean?"

One of the old set was a partner in a City house; another was a barrister; a third, a fourth, and a fifth had once been officers in the army, and so on. He would call. He would find out if they intended to be nasty about a thing now fifteen years old, if, indeed, they knew of it.

The results of his visits illustrated in a very surprising manner the tendency which I have already deplored. That is to say, no one was in the least disposed to forget that thing, which they knew perfectly well, and coupled with his memory as indelibly as the sailor associates an anchor with the skin of his arm. And yet remark that he, the man chiefly concerned, was as willing to bury it and have done with it, as the Red Indians are, in time of peace, to bury a tomahawk!

I have often wondered if that tomahawk was always expended in the funeral service or whether it was sometimes dug up by a Resurrection brave and traded away for what it would fetch in whiskey.

It is a dreadful story of outrage and humiliation.

First, Mr. Brooke West went to call upon his old friend the partner in the City house. No one in his younger days had carried on the game with greater eagerness than the frolicsome young merchant adventurer. Surely this man, at least, would be glad to welcome his old friend.

Was he glad? Not at all. On the contrary it appeared that he was very sorry. When he got Mr. Brooke West's card, which was sent in to him, this merchant, no longer frolicsome, but now quite sober and dignified, turned very red in the cheeks—they were most respectable cheeks now, as ready to blush at wickedness as the cheek of the young person, and regularly seen every Sunday at church—said strong things about the unqualified impudence of disgraced swindlers, and sent out word that if the caller and owner of the card did not instantly leave that office, he was without delay to be driven and kicked down the stairs by the united efforts of the clerks.

Mr. Brooke West received this message, delivered in its integrity, without making any reply or attempt at justification. For a moment his eyes flashed and he clenched his fists so that the clerk who glibly

delivered the reply, quailed and turned pale. Then, without a word, he walked away. It is the worst of such a situation that a man cannot afford the luxury of a row, else he would have gone for that irreproachable merchant.

Next he went, but with much less confidence, to call upon another old pal, a barrister in the Temple. He was a man who had got on in his profession, thought of taking silk, gambled no more, had forgotten the ways of iniquity and its wages, was married and lived on Campden Hill, and the memory of his younger days, when it came back to him, was no longer a thing he loved to dwell upon.

He, too, on receiving the card, jumped in his chair, used strong words, tore up the card, and sent an insulting message that he had nothing whatever to say to Mr. Brooke West, and refused to see him.

Again the Colonel walked away without reply. But, I think that, had he got that respectable merchant and that successful lawyer on the Embankment in the evening, two distinct flops or splashes would have been presently heard in the river; or had he met either of them on a lonely heath after dark there would have been a lively dance, with steps not described in the books.

Next, he went to his old club, where he found a new hall-porter, who did not know him. First, he asked for his old friend Captain Pacer! Alas! the gallant captain was dead this many a long year. Then for Major Fauchelevent, another of the glorious band of revellers! Why, the major had left the club a long time; had been, in fact, expelled from it. Then he asked for Colonel Cassade! This member, now General Cassade, was actually in the club at that moment. Mr. Brooke West sent up his card, and waited with pale face, and lips that trembled a little. In two minutes the general himself came down the stairs, leaning heavily on his stick, grey-haired, red-faced, gouty. And as for greeting, friendly smile, hand-shaking, and a cordial welcome home!—when the returned prodigal held out his hand, advancing with a genial smile, though an uncertain eye, and said with hearty smile, "Old fellow! How goes it?" the gallant officer, standing in the middle of the hall, banged his stick on the floor, so that the panes in the windows shook for fear, and every pair of tongs jumped, and most of the glasses in the house fell into small fragments; and asked with purple cheeks and furious eyes,

and a stentorian voice, what in the name of this, and of that—words which find their fittest home on the banks of the silver Thames, and especially at Richmond, or beside the stalls of Billingsgate—what he meant by his confounded impudence! A fellow who was expelled—actually expelled that very same club, daring to send up his impudent card, to call upon him, the general!

"Turn him out, hall-porter, do you hear?" he cried. "Turn him out into the street! Knock him down if he ventures to call again! Turn him out, I say!"

This last blow left no room for hope. That part of the world—after all a very small one—was closed. As a matter of fact, Mr. Brooke West did not know until then that he had been expelled the club. He thought that perhaps a kindly interpretation of certain fishy transactions, which had led to his exile, might have been laid before the committee. Well, that was done; he must try something else. As for making a scene or having a row, that was out of the question. He changed his hotel; he went to the Langham, where there are generally more Americans than English. There was little fear that anybody there would recognise him for what he had been in the Southern and Western States. He was now the English gentleman, who had travelled and lost some of the national prejudice and reserve. And here he stayed for six months and more. He began to make acquaintances, and presently forced his way to certain places where play—good, honest, high play—is to be had, whether baccarat, napoleon, hazard, monté, euchre, poker, or the simple roulette. He found there were still plenty of hawks about, and pigeons harder than ever to catch and pluck. But he did pretty well.

I do not know how or when it was that he first thought of Montoro's daughter. By accident he carried off her letters with the bank-notes. Now and then he turned them over in his portmanteau. "My dearest Father," they began, and after eight pages at least of gossip, they ended, "Your most affectionate and loving daughter, Milly Montoro." There was property—she spoke about "the houses;" the poor creature, her father, had spoken of certain houses. Gradually he came to think upon this property more and more. It was almost certainly her father's property; it was not likely that it was settled upon the girl. Could not he get that property! It was a little thing, but it might be of

immense service to him. And the thought came to fill his brain, as the thought of Naboth's vineyard filled the brain of Ahab. But there was only one way to get it; only one way to get that property—viz., boldly to assume the name of the man he had robbed; to see as little as possible of the girl and her relatives; and to sell the property for what it would fetch, put the money in his own pocket, and go away with it. As for the girl, she would find something to do; young people can always work. And houses worth a hundred and fifty pounds a year can be sold for something—two thousand pounds, or perhaps more. Two thousand pounds! But, then, to become a Claimant—to assume another man's personality!

The longer he pondered over this idea the more it pleased him. As for difficulties, there were, so far as he could see, few, so long as he kept out of the way of Montoro's cousins and relations; he could show an exact knowledge of the life led by the girl who had told her father everything; he had her letters; he knew the scrambling household, the enthusiast and visionary, the sons who had no chance at home and longed for one abroad—everything. He knew, or guessed, what kind of letters the man who had made so enormous a fortune sent to his daughter; they were vague letters, full of splendours and hazy glories, about which he could build any structure he pleased. Everything was ready to his hand, provided only there was no one to swear that he could not be the lost Montoro. Here again he was helped, though he admitted to himself that it was the one serious risk. The girl's relations neglected her altogether. They never made any enquiry about her; her father's people, who belonged to quite the lower class of clerks, were scattered and dispersed, and too much occupied with their own troubles to ask what had become of Charles's girl; her mother's sister, she who had married into "carriage company," had gone on up the hill of fortune, and was now, with her husband, so rich that she had a great house at Wimbledon, with more than one carriage, and contented herself with writing to her niece once a year or so. The very people in whose house she lived knew nothing of her father; nothing was wanted to carry through the business but swiftness and courage—a rush and a bold front. If, in the interval, which must be brief, between the first appearance and the last, cousins should offer to renew cousinly acquaintance,

those cousins must be insulted and snubbed. The thing could be done safely if it were done quickly. And though it was impossible to foresee all the difficulties which might arise, he could provide against most. Freedom and skill in lying, it seemed to him, were the first essentials. And so far he was the equal of any living man.

You have seen how he made his first appearance. It was after dark; if, peradventure, there was any one who might have known Montoro in the old days, then was there time to prepare that person for a change in appearance, manner, and voice; he did not assume the manner of the affectionate and tender parent; he could not, in the first place, and in the next, it was better for his purposes to be the hard and stern father. He was astonished, certainly, at his daughter's embrace, having forgotten that girls do kiss their fathers; but on the whole he was satisfied. So far he had been accepted without the slightest suspicion.

The next day he drove to Veritas Villa in the afternoon. His daughter came to him, but on this occasion she did not offer to throw herself into his arms; he held out his hand coldly, and she took it as coldly, though she had been crying all the night over this disappointment of a father. Many a woman cries over a disappointing son, but few have to lament that a father does not turn out as he had been expected. Perhaps she had allowed her imagination too much freedom. All she had to go upon were his letters, and these spoke to her of a writer very different from this cold man with the hard eyes.

"Let us talk," he said. "There is a good deal to say. Let me see, Milly is your name, is it not? Yes—Milly, to be sure—Milly." He wondered if it was Emily, Amelia, Millicent, Matilda, or something else. "It is strange, at first, talking to my own daughter."

"You did not find it strange writing to her."

"No, that was different. Did you expect to find your father what he is?"

"I did not," said Milly truthfully.

"You took me at your mother's estimate. I believe she told you I was a meek and gentle nature. Perhaps, in those days, I was. If a man wants to get on, over there, mind you, he must get rid of his meekness. So, that is the first thing I have to say. Next, I am accustomed to have my own way. Please remember that. Perhaps you thought when I came home you would

have it all your way. Not so fast, young lady."

Milly said nothing; but a red flush on either cheek might have told him, had he remembered Matilda, that she was her mother's daughter.

"When your mother died, you left Hackney Wick. Lord! what a place to live in! Where was it that you lived in Hackney Wick?"

"Why," said the girl, surprised, "in the old house, of course, where you lived until you went away."

"To be sure—the old house; the old house in Hackney Wick. And then you came here?"

"Mr. Richard Ambler, who managed the houses, suggested his cousin to my aunt, when they wanted some one to take care of me."

"Richard—Richard Ambler," he stroked his chin. "Do I remember him?"

"No, I should think not. He told me once he had never seen you."

"Good. I will go to see him then. Write down his address. He manages the houses, does he? We will walk round some day and see the old place. Are there any of my old friends left to see you sometimes?"

She shook her head.

"I think I have never seen any of your old friends or relations at all. I do not know where they are."

"Nor do I," he said, with perfect truth. "We shall not trouble ourselves much to find them, that is very certain. And your mother's people?"

"They now live at Wimbledon, a long way off; and I seldom see my aunt Paulina or my cousins. I do not think anybody cares very much about me, except the Amblers here."

"Very good," her father replied. "They keep away from you so long as you are poor, do they? Then we will keep away from them now that we are rich. As for me, remember that I refuse to see cousins of this kind. Absolutely refuse, mind!"

He looked so fierce—so needlessly fierce—that Milly was frightened. Certainly this new father of hers was not one to be crossed.

"When I went away," he said presently, "when I gave up the post I held in the firm of—— What the devil now was the name of the people?"

Milly shook her head. She did not know.

"I think the least you could have done," he replied angrily, "was to make yourself

acquainted with the history of your own father. Never mind. What did you care about your father? When I went away your mother had about a hundred and fifty pounds a year—some trifle——"

"She lived upon it, trifle though you call it, until she died, since you sent her nothing, and I have lived upon it since," said Milly quickly.

"Yes, yes—I know. What is it worth now?"

"The houses are all let, and they produce, I believe, after allowing for repairs, about a hundred and eighty pounds a year. This is all paid to Mr. Ambler for my maintenance, education, and dress."

"A very handsome sum, upon my word! A hundred and eighty pounds a year! It should have been eighty, that would have been quite enough, and the rest saved for me."

"For you? But the property was my mother's, who left it to me!"

"Did she make any will?"

"No; there was no need. Nobody else could take her property."

"You forget—her husband. There were no settlements;" he did not at all know whether there were any or not, but he assumed that there were none. "All your mother's effects were therefore, and are still, mine."

His! Milly trembled—was she to lose her little property—the property which was going to do so much for the home when she married George?

"Fortunately," she said timidly, "you are so rich that you do not want it!"

"Rich! yes; but no man refuses money, or can afford to throw it away. As for those houses—see, girl," he rose and walked to the window, "it is as well to understand at once—I have come over here at great loss of time and money, leaving enormous affairs—affairs of the very greatest importance, in the hands of people I only half trust, for you. I cannot stay long, there is nothing for me to do here; I have got no friends in England; I am out of the world; and there is no getting back to the old life."

"Getting back to the old life!" Milly stared and gasped. She pretty well knew what the old life was, with penniless brother-clerks for companions, and the bar-parlour for club; "the old life!"

"Of course; when I said the old life, I mean the old friends."

"Would you care to meet them again—those old friends of yours?"

Milly remembered her mother's lamentations over the memory of those old friends who took her husband from his home, led him into taverns, drank with him, and made him smoke too much tobacco; initiated him into the Orders and Brotherhoods of Ancient Buffaloes, Druids, Shepherds, Odd-Fellows, or even Free and Accepted Masons. Her husband's love of low life, she said, coupled with his lack of ambition, was the bane of her married life. Perhaps she exaggerated.

"As for the friends," her father replied, "if they have gone on in the old way, I don't want to meet them. When a man gets up in the world, the first thing he should do is to kick away the ladder, and not know one of 'em. As for the old life, I don't suppose I ever want to hear about that again. Why I was a clerk in the City; I had to go and write all day. A pretty kind of life mine was: at a desk all day, and your mother's tongue in the evening. Very well, then. Don't interrupt. There is nothing to keep me here. I shall sell the property, and we will go back together; father and daughter ought not to be separated; I suppose there is no particular reason why you should stay here, is there?"

"There is George," she replied.

"Your sweetheart? The chemist's clerk? You may leave me to settle with him. About this Ambler fellow, this jackass with the Discovery, has he got any money, or do you keep him and all his family, too?"

"He has a small fortune; I know what it is because I have heard over and over again. He has five thousand pounds in the Three per Cents."

"Of course, then, he is mighty fond of you with your hundred and eighty. Why, it is as good as doubling his income. Go tell him, if he is in the house, that I want to see him."

"Father," said Milly, standing before him, and looking him straight in the face, "there is one thing in which you must please understand me at once. I can never give up George."

"Not even to go back with me—your own father?"

"Not even that. I do not think, in any case, even without George, I could go back with you."

"Why not, pray?"

"Because," she was a perfectly truthful girl, and she therefore spoke exactly what was in her mind, "because I am afraid of you. Your letters prepared me for some-

thing very different. You are cold and harsh; you begin with taking away my property—my own, although you are so rich that you despise it for being such a very little property. I cannot prevent you, I suppose. But I will not go back to America with you, and I will not give up Geo——"

She broke down, her voice choked; she fled because she would not let this hard father of hers see that he had made her cry.

"It is rather more serious work than I anticipated," said the Claimant to himself. "It makes a man respect the stage-father. I suppose she expected to be kissed and cuddled and made much of. Well—I can't do it. As for George, I think it is a deuced lucky thing there is a George, because she's a creature with a will of her own, not like her fool of a father, and she certainly will not give up her lover for a dozen fathers. So much the better for me. Because now I can sell up the property, and go away openly without concerning myself about an undutiful child who prefers to remain with her George. It is better than running away. I am really very pleased there is a George. Bless them both! Suppose she had thrown herself upon my bosom and swore never to leave her fond and faithful father!"

At supper that evening, Mr. Ambler could talk of nothing but Mr. Montoro, who had spent two hours with him in the map-room, and had been most affable and kind.

"Before speaking of the business in hand, which was, of course, you, Milly, my dear, he engaged in conversation concerning the Great Discovery. I found in him one of those candid intellects, keen, incisive, logical, and open to conviction. Nothing of prejudice about Mr. Montoro. He has been brought up, he confesses, in the old exploded school, and has always been taught that the earth was round; he was, indeed, greatly surprised to learn that it is, on the other hand, flat, with a surrounding Rim of ice. I begged him not to take my simple word for it, but to listen, first, to the arguments. Well, he sat down. First, I gave him my Plain Reasons—these shook him. Then he answered, one after another, my Simple Questions, and I flatter myself conviction was growing in. Then I read him the Refutation, which he put in his pocket, and promised to see me again upon the matter.

"Then he began to talk about his own

affairs. Milly, he is immensely rich, he is a millionaire over and over again. I can hardly tell you what he has; there are mines, cattle-runs, farms, houses—one whole town belongs to him, he says. Think of it. What a glorious country it must be for a man in less than twenty years to accumulate such wealth! I think I have made a Recruit of the very first water—a Croesus among Recruits. Hitherto, what we lacked in money we made up in logic. Perhaps now we shall get both money and logic.

“He spoke, among other things, of a college or university, I forget which, in this city of his. It was built and is owned entirely by himself. He said that among other professional chairs there is a chair of astronomy worth a thousand a year or so, and that it is, by great good luck, at present vacant. He has this appointment in his own gift. If, he added, he is quite satisfied with the new Discovery as to which he was already favourably prepared by his daughter’s letters—thank you, Milly, my dear, you are always our guardian angel”—Milly looked horribly guilty—“he sees no reason why I should not fill that chair.”

“Oh, Lord!” cried George.

“Eh, my dear?—eh, boys?”

“Where did he say it is?” asked George.

“A thousand a year! In his own gift? And in America?”

“He did not say where. We were only discussing preliminaries, and I do think, children, that the name of Professor Ambler—no longer plain Reginald Ambler—on a title-page will carry weight, whether it is the title-page of the Plain Reasons or the Simple Questions.”

But Milly’s cheeks were burning, because she had never spoken of her guardian’s Discovery with respect in any letter to her father. What did he want to deceive Mr. Ambler for in so trifling a matter? And with all this wealth, why—why should he desire to take from her the little property which would be so useful to George and herself? Was it to make her an heiress?

“George,” she said that night when she dismissed him at the garden-gate, “I do not want his riches; I wish he would go away and leave me. Oh, George, I do not feel the least speck of love for him!”

CHAPTER V. A BEAUTIFUL DREAM.

So far, things had gone so easily with this Pretender, that he began seriously to wonder why—considering the vast

number of lost cousins, missing parents, strayed brothers, and wandering uncles, claimants like himself for the family affection, and family funds—family friends do not continually turn up. Perhaps they do. Perhaps there are hundreds among us—unsuspecting innocents—bearing names to which they are not entitled, and enjoying fortunes to which they have no right. What is to prevent a man who knows the circumstances to march into the club of a dead man, for instance, supposing he alone knows that the man is dead, and taking up his membership?

Our Claimant went to the villa again next day, and the day after. The girl, who thought she was his daughter, attracted him. She looked so pretty that he could not choose but come. And after fifteen years, the sight of a young and beautiful English girl is something, even to a hardened, selfish old gambler. She behaved nicely to him, was respectful in her language, and obedient, save in the matter of that young fellow.

“Milly,” he said at the fourth visit—he was already so far advanced that he called the girl by her Christian-name, and even addressed her as “my dear,” and “my child,” without stammering or hesitation. “Milly, we are getting on better. Are you still afraid of me?”

“How can I help being afraid of you?” she replied truthfully. “You want to take me away from my friends, and from my lover, and you are going to take away what I thought was my property.”

“Oh, your property! Silly child! Why, across the ocean, for every pound you have here, you shall get a hundred. Your property! Why, it is because I want to have done with the place altogether that I wish to sell it. Never heed such a trifle. Now tell me, do you like society?”

“I do not know, we have no friends. I believe there is very good society at Stamford Hill, but we never go anywhere.”

“Do you like theatres?”

“I do not know; we never go to any.”

“Do you like concerts?”

“Oh yes. I have been to a good many concerts, and there are lectures and dissolving-views.”

“Do you like the West End?”

“I have never been there. You do not know as yet; we are very quiet people; we are always at home working for the children.”

“Yes,” her father was grown softer in his manner, though he was no whit more

demonstrative or affectionate; "ye—yes," he said, stroking his moustache; "all these things you know nothing of, but you would love them if you knew them. Milly, without society there is no life; without amusement there is no life; without excitement there is no life. You miserable people here do not live; you sit all together in a room, you breathe and walk in a cage; you know nothing about the world; you have no idea of its pleasures. If you marry this young clerk, you will go on breathing and walking in a cage. Why, it fills me with amazement that you can go on contentedly with this suburban life; and yet there must be millions all living like this."

"Why not? It is a very pleasant life. I think I would rather not have the excitement you speak of."

"Come with me, Milly," said her father, his face actually softening, "and you shall have a life which shall give you one pleasure after another—every day crowded and filled up with pleasures."

But she shook her head.

"I was thankful for George at first," he said to himself. "I thought it would rid me of the girl. Now I see I was a fool, for I could do much better with her than without her. But how to persuade her?"

For by this time another thought was lying in his brain, receiving every day new food and encouragement. He saw, in a kind of ecstatic vision, a salon or drawing-room such as he had read of in the old days when he used to read French novels. It was a beautifully furnished room, with cabinets, china, pictures, a piano, mirrors, and all the pretty things which belong to the life he had abandoned fifteen years ago. He sighed as he thought of such a room. "I did not know," he said, "until I came home, that I cared for it all so much." The room was full of people; there were ladies in beautiful toilettes, young men in evening dress. They were sitting, walking, and talking. He was himself a gentleman again to outward show. At the piano sat the girl—he always thought of Milly as the girl—playing and singing, the younger men hovering round her, making their court. Presently she rose, said something, and laughed, and they all sat down to a table covered with green cloth, he at the head.

Yes, the Colonel was not in imagination returning to paths of virtue, which, whether they led him into pleasant drawing-rooms or not, would certainly prove

monotonous to him. It filled his soul with happiness, however, to think that he could fill a room with people "comme il faut," through the attractions of his daughter, and do a stroke of business with them afterwards. The perfect gambler can think of nothing as complete, unless there are a pack of cards in it and a green table.

There was also another dream which much he loved, yet sometimes feared might be difficult to realise. In this dream there was one young man only in the room besides the girl and himself. The young man was often changed, because the evening was made expensive for him. And in this dream there was a mirror before the piano in which the girl saw the hand held by the young man when the flirting and singing were over and play began. Then, by a judicious arrangement of chords, she conveyed to her confederate the knowledge of that hand; or else she got up and looked over his shoulder, while that innocent sheep's eyes looked up into her artless face. Oh, a beautiful dream! But before it could become possible two things were necessary: the girl must be across the water, and away from her friends, and she must be made to love a life of luxury and ease.

"Good Heavens!" he cried, "what a chance there is for me! They've tried it with their painted and ruddled old hacks, their Frenchwomen and their octoroons, but never once, I swear, with a sweet-faced, innocent-looking English girl. They couldn't get one. As for difficulty, there would be none once across the Atlantic, away from all her friends. As for doing her any harm, that is rubbish. Very likely she would fall in love—many young women do. I could get her off my hands that way without any trouble. And, if not, why, then, when I had made all I want—it isn't really much—I could tell her everything, and pack her off to Johnny in Oregon. She'll console him for the loss of the money, which wasn't his any more than mine, and I shouldn't want her more than a year or two."

He forgot that, before you get an honest English girl to act as professional decoy to a card-sharper, there is likely to be a very considerable kind of row.

This dream remained in his mind so long that it became a purpose with him. He was growing old; it would be dreadful to give up the comfortable life to which he had returned, and yet what to do when the money went? He thought how easy

and pleasant it would be to receive his friends in a real high-toned salon, with a pretty girl to play and sing to them, and help him to cheat them. She should go with him. As for her lover, he must be given up.

But first it was necessary to win her confidence. This he might have done very easily by the simple show of affection. The man could feign a good deal, but love, the plain and unmistakable love with which many foolish fathers wrap up and surround their daughters, he could not feign. Therefore he sought to win her confidence by dazzling her.

First, he took her to a splendid restaurant, and gave her a magnificent dinner, consisting of a dozen courses, served in a great room full of glass, mirrors, and flowers, with champagne, of which Milly had heard, but had never tasted.

"If you like," said her father, "you shall dine like this every night. Good Heavens! how have I longed in America for this kind of thing again—I mean in the first days, you know, before——"

"What, could you have known anything of this kind of life in the old days?"

"Perhaps," he said, after a while, "a clerk may get some knowledge of what a dinner should be by flattening his nose at the window."

"But," she went on, "to waste all this time and money every day in such a tedious——"

"Confound it!" he cried in a rage. "You are not worth such a dinner. After all, how should you understand it? A mutton-chop and a potato, I believe, would have pleased you quite as well."

Then he took her to a theatre. They sat in a private box, and Milly looked with wonder from the stage to the house, and the house to the stalls. The performance was a burlesque, and a favourite one. It was played partly by actresses dressed as men, and Milly pitied them, though the audience clapped and applauded. She could see nothing to applaud; you see it wants a little education before a girl, a suburban and East End girl, can really admire the spectacle of women dressed in tights, or the performance of a ballet, or the delivery of bad verses crammed with puns, or the comic business, which seems to them like horseplay. Such a girl does not see anything to laugh at in a pun, or in a funny get-up, or in a man tumbling down—for that matter, she does not want to laugh at all; she would like rather to

cry, even, so long as she could see a beautiful story beautifully played. But this her father did not understand, and fell into a rage when he perceived that Milly was only bored with the performance. He thought she was sulking with him on account of his previous harshness.

"You shall have a private theatre of your own if you like, and a ballet and all, and you shall be manager," he said. "You shall act on your stage if you like, only say what you would like."

"I do not want any ballet, thank you," she replied coldly, "and I thought theatres were better worth going to."

"Oh, very well," he replied; "if you are resolved to like nothing I do for you, I might as well leave off trying to please you."

He was now in no hurry about going back. At first he spoke of going back in a few days, but he stayed on. It was a fortnight since he first came to the villa, and now he came every day, though Upper Clapton is not by any means "handy" for the Langham Hotel. He saw that the girl disliked him still, but that she was trying to conquer her dislike, and he went on with his plan of conciliation. He had expected suspicion; there was none in any quarter: he was even received by Mr. Richard Ambler, on whom he called to ask about his houses, without the least suspicion. What he had not expected, because he would not have reckoned it as a factor of the least importance, was dislike. Now, with this larger scheme in his mind, it was of the first importance that the girl should learn to trust in him and to believe him before getting her to obey him.

He therefore persisted. Since she did not care for the theatre, he took her to the races. He was rewarded by the consciousness that the girl was all day profoundly dejected. She did not want to see the horses running; she did not in the least care who won; and she was frightened at the great crowd, in which she felt so entirely out of place. Yet he had got a carriage, a hamper, and a most beautiful lunch, and was mindful of a day long past when, with a similar carriage and hamper, but another companion, he had spent a most enjoyable day at Ascot.

He drank all the champagne himself—a little too much—and then began telling her stories which terrified her, and made her wonder what manner of life her father must have led before he married, since he was familiar with what seemed to her

simple mind the most wicked and wasteful profligacy.

"Do you like no kind of amusement, then?" he asked her.

She tried to explain to him that there are many other amusements besides feasting, drinking, burlesques, racing, betting, and gambling, which might seem to girls pleasing and desirable things.

"Sometimes," she said, "on summer evenings I go upon the river with George, or we walk to Tottenham and as far as Hornsey. There are lectures to go to, and a choral society, then we have lawn-tennis, and sometimes there are new books to read, and new music to play."

Her father grunted.

Then he tried her with the shops of Regent Street. No woman, he thought, can withstand the temptation of fine things. He showed her all the beautiful things in the world, or nearly all—dainty costumes, costly with lace, bonnets which were a dream of loveliness, gloves and parasols, ribbons, and what not—such as the girl had never dreamed of possessing. She refused them—she actually refused them.

"George," she said, "is only a clerk as yet. If I were to go dressed in these beautiful things it would make him ridiculous."

"George! What do I know about George? Are you not my daughter and my heiress? Can't you remember that? Sometimes one would think you were going out to America as a pauper. Do you really imagine that my daughter—mine!—could show herself in New York dressed like——"

"Like the daughter and the wife of a clerk. But perhaps the New York people will have no opportunity of giving an opinion."

"Was there ever before," asked her father impatiently, "a girl who was bound to inherit millions, and preferred—actually preferred to go about as shabby as a shop-girl?"

"George is only a clerk," she said; "I must dress according to my husband's station."

"Why, hang it! are you not my heiress? Who will have my money if not you? One would think you were going out to America to be a governess."

"Forgive me," she said. "I have been so long accustomed to consider your Fortune as a thing which has nothing to do with me, that I cannot suddenly change my mind. If you designed to make me an

heiress, you should have told me so ten years ago. Then, I dare say, I should have been brought up differently. And, perhaps, I should have liked these things. But I belong to the people whom you now despise—though you were born among them. We live the simple, homely life which you have forgotten. As for these things—your great dinners, your theatres, and all the rest of them, I suppose you enjoy them now. But in the old days you knew nothing of them. Had you not better leave me alone with my friends, just as you always have done? You do not want me in your new life. Why," she looked him full in the face with those honest eyes of hers, "there is something—I know not what—which stands between us. You do not love me as you used to do when you wrote to me, or else you can no longer pretend as you did then—but I cannot believe those letters were all pretence. When I am with you I irritate you, and then you fly into a rage and swear. You try to please me with all kinds of things which I do not want——"

"What is it you do want?" he asked her. "What can I buy for you? Only tell me. See, Milly, I want you to like me. It isn't a question of money"—indeed it was not—"I will buy anything you fancy. But you won't like anything that I can say or do. As for those old letters of mine, bring them to me. Who is to remember what he said ten years ago—writing to a little schoolgirl?"

She brought them to him obediently. There were not many—only about twenty, all tied up neatly with green silk and smelling of lavender. He cut the string and read the letters deliberately. Remembering the log-hut, and the whiskey-bottle, Johnny's wandering eyes and rambling speech, his miserable story and his wretched life, he was struck with admiration. The man possessed the first and most essential qualifications of a novelist—he could make those who read his letters believe his statements; more than this, he could enter into his reader's mind and understand what she would think of himself; what sort of hero she would construct of her father; and he wrote accordingly.

"I was a clever fellow," he said at length, "when I wrote those letters. Yes, Milly, there are many things in my life of which I may be proud, and many which might have to be explained away. You thought from these letters that it was all sailing before a fair wind. You are mistaken; it was a

hard fight all the time with men as keen to get on as I was myself. Would you have liked me to tell you the true history of those years of struggle?"

"I should like," said Milly, "my father to be as affectionate and as tender to me in words as he was in writing."

He shook his head.

"It can't be, my child. If you like I could write more letters to you, just the same as these. But I can't talk like that. Here, take back the things!"

"I do not want them any more," she replied sadly. "To read them now would give me more pain than pleasure. I would rather talk with you than have any more letters from you."

"Why, there," he replied, "that is exactly what I wanted you to say. No more humbugging milk-and-water letters, but good, honest, straightforward talk. You know me now, Milly, for what I am;" he stood upright and struck his chest; "a strong, plain man, and perhaps as good-hearted as if I came to you with tears and kisses. I am pleased with you—yes, satisfied and pleased. You are a very pretty, well-set-up girl, good face, good figure, good form. You will do. You don't pretend to love your father; very well, how should you? And you are not afraid to tell him so. I like you the better for it. Some day, perhaps, you will like me. Meantime, as you are my daughter, and are going to inherit everything, come out with me first to look at your inheritance."

Always the same refrain, "Come out with me."

He certainly made no pretence at being a mild and peaceful character, and filled the walls of Veritas Villa with tales which fired the blood of the boys, and made them long to rush beyond the reach of civilisation, to ride the half-broken mustang, to shoot at Mexican robbers, to sleep round camp-fires, to wear a red-flannel shirt, a crimson belt, a slouched hat, and great boots. Even Copernica thought that no woman could have a happier lot than to live in constant danger from scalping Indians and blood-thirsty Mexicans.

He laid himself out to please everybody except George, whom he treated with cold contempt, insomuch that the lover was fain to keep away from the house when Milly's father was there, and carried on his courtship in the garden. He conciliated Mrs. Ambler with smooth words and flatteries, assuring her that there was no

lady in England who would have brought up his daughter with more care and kindness than she had shown, and that the boys and girls should always be his sacred care, and he gave them all watches, and to Copernica a gold watch and chain.

Yet they were afraid of him.

As for the Discoverer, Mr. Montoro became to him as a god, or pope at least, because he announced his adhesion to the theory, and admitted that he could no longer stand out against the overwhelming arguments in its favour.

"The world is flat," he said. "How thick it is, which we should see if we looked beyond the Outer Rim, it is impossible, as you say, for us to surmise. I have never taken any special interest in science, because my work has been of a more practical nature, but I hope I can follow an argument as well as other men; and your argument, Mr. Ambler, has convinced me."

"To win a Recruit, and such a Recruit," replied the blushing philosopher, "by the sheer force of persuasion is indeed a triumph."

Mr. Montoro then turned the conversation upon the subject of his college. It was a new college, he said; there would be, probably, at first, but a small number of students; the astronomical class would be one of the smallest. Still, it was an opening; the country was becoming settled and populated; the college was endowed; gradually the institution would grow. Would it really be worth Mr. Ambler's while to leave London and transport himself to a strange country in order to lecture on his own system in his own way?

Worth his while! The Discoverer bounded in his chair.

"Then, Mr. Ambler, I shall be pleased to offer you the post. It is my intention to leave this country for America in a few weeks. You can follow as soon after me as is possible for you to wind up your affairs."

"I have no affairs," replied the Philosopher. "There is the society, to be sure, but I am afraid that there is only one man, my convert Bagshott, who will lament its temporary suspension. Bagshott leaves me the scientific department, and occupies himself with the weekly demonstration from his pulpit that the Discovery is the only way of reconciling revelation with science. The only way, Mr. Montoro! Such a man is useful to me, and I shall be sorry to leave him. They say his con-

gregation has dwindled to nothing. But the scientific aspect of the question, which is my own special department, demands that such a chance of spreading the Truth should not be neglected. Where, sir, if I may ask, is your college situated?"

"It is," said Mr. Montoro, as unblushingly as if he had been Johnny of Oregon himself—"it is in Nevada, in the city which has risen on my own ground, surrounding my own works. You will not find it on any map, because the city has only been built two or three years. You go first to Colorado, and next—— But no matter for these details. They can wait."

It will be seen presently with what object the Colonel was deceiving the unfortunate philosopher.

"Children," he said that evening, "the way is now clear to me. Should you like to go to Nevada?"

Nevada! Bret Harte's books were about Nevada, were they not? Nevada; where there are rocky mountains, grizzly bears, silver-mines, adventurers, wolves, buffaloes, prairies, rattlesnakes, perils and dangers, wealth, revolvers, bowie-knives, and happiness! Go to Nevada? Kepler looked at Tycho Brahe, and gasped. Ptolemy seized Galileo by the hand, and said, "Oh, oh!" slowly, and from his heart.

"Where is Nevada?" asked his wife.

"It is one of the newest of the States. It is the place where Mr. Montoro made his money. You did not know that, Milly?"

"No. I have never had any letters from Nevada."

"There he has built a city—it is only two years old—on his own grounds, and about his own works; and in the city is the college. I am offered—definitively and formally offered—the chair of astronomy. Shall I accept the offer?"

There was a rapturous shout.

"Well, my children," he went on, "if it is ordained that I achieve the greatness in America, which Oxford and Cambridge refuse me, I hope that I shall accept it in a becoming spirit. As for you going with me, boys, I am sure that with Mr. Montoro's glorious example before us, and his patronage at starting, we need have no fear or hesitation."

And then there was such joy in the Ambler family as would have done your heart good only to see it, without understanding what it was about at all. To the elder boys it meant wealth unbounded, like Mr. Montoro's, but without so much temper; to the younger it meant change

and fun—no doubt there were no schools in Nevada; to Copernica it meant justice—tardy, but still justice—to her father; to the good wife it meant relief from tightness. Who would not go to Nevada for a thousand pounds a year?

Perhaps, too, they all thought there might come a time when there would be less talk about that Grand Discovery which made the family look upon all glory as vanity, so much had it spoiled and wasted the father's life.

It was now four weeks since Mr. Montoro's return. He had partly succeeded in reconciling Milly. She did not, it is true, venture again upon the mistake of kissing him, or of expecting any caresses from him; but she had overcome the repulsion which at first filled her soul with regard to him. Perhaps, if he had behaved more kindly with regard to George, she would have looked upon him with some approach to affection. What he wanted most, however, he had got from her. She trusted him; she did not in the least suspect him, and she was growing very nicely, and just as he could wish, to feel towards the great Fortune a personal interest. He felt sure that he could manage the rest very easily, once she was away from her friends. You do not, when you go a tempting, approach the subject straight; you work round it; you talk about other things; you prepare the mind for it; you sap the ground; you gradually destroy principle; you do not, at last, make the last step till you are perfectly certain of success. The Colonel, who was a veritable serpent for craft and subtlety, knew that it would take time to convert an innocent girl into a rogue, thief, and confederate of cheats; but he knew what he was about, and he also knew from long experience that there are few so strong as to resist all kinds of temptation.

He now took his next step.

"I must tell you, Milly," he said with a touch of sorrow in his voice, "that I am now making my preparations to go back in a week—this day week. I have again seen Mr. Richard Ambler, and I hear that he can find me a purchaser for the houses, and will draw up the necessary papers immediately. You have heard that I have given Mr. Ambler a post in my college. He and his family will therefore start at once. This, if you persist in refusing to accompany me, deprives you of a home."

"I can find one with George."

"I shall not oppose it," said her father. "I might have looked higher for my

daughter, but I will no longer oppose your inclinations. You shall marry the man of your choice, and I hope you will be happy. What you will do when you come into your Fortune I do not know. You will not, I fear, either of you, be equal to the position in which you will find yourselves. However, that is, after all, not my business, because I neglected you so long. It is my punishment that I cannot interfere as an ordinary parent might."

"You are very kind to me now," said Milly.

"You mean that I was not always. Perhaps not—perhaps not. I did not know you, Milly, when first I landed, four weeks ago. Forgive me, my daughter!"

She looked at him in surprise. Strange that even when he was at his softest, using words which in other men would have been accompanied by some outward sign of tenderness, his eyes were as keen and his mouth as hard as if he were contemplating something connected with fight and struggle.

"Now, Milly, I have been thinking a good bit over things, and I am prepared to say to you, 'Go and marry your lover.' I will not ask you to give him up, and come across the water with me. I will even make a handsome allowance, which will enable you to live like a lady, if you please."

"Oh!" she replied, taking his hand. But he withdrew it quickly, as if afraid of her falling upon his neck again. "I did not expect this," she added. "What am I to say? How shall I thank you?"

"Nay, I want no thanks. There is only one thing you might do to pleasure your father."

"Why, is there anything, except giving up George, that I would not do?"

"It is this, Milly: You know I have been a long time from home, but I have never forgotten you; my letters prove that. Now, it grieves me to go back without even being able to show any of my kith or kin what I have done and the edifice I have raised. It is hard to have no one belonging to you. They will say when I go back, 'Colonel'—they call me Colonel, out there—'how did you find the little maid?'—that's you, Milly—that is you; and I shall have to tell them in reply that the little maid is grown up into a woman, who doesn't care about her father—why, how should she? it is not in reason that she should—and is going to be married to a lover in a low station of life. And

there is not a creature in all the world who cares about me. It seems hard, doesn't it? What is the use of money if it can't bring me that kind of happiness?"

The tears came into Milly's eyes as she stood before her father and listened. They would have flowed more readily if his own had showed the least emotion.

"Then I thought to myself, suppose that Milly would come over with me for a year, or two years—not more. Suppose I were to promise her faithfully that after two years, at most, she should go back to her lover, if she pleased. It is not a very long time, two years. Milly is young; her lover is young. He may very well wait two years. Come, Milly, what do you say? A run across the ocean, a ride across the continent. First, Nevada for a year or so; then we will run over to California; perhaps go up country to—to Oregon," he laughed. "Yes, I should like to show you Oregon. I know people in Oregon who would interest you very much. And when you were tired of your father, and his great house, and all, you could come straight away back to your lover's arms. What do you say, Milly?"

She was silent, thinking. Was there ever a more reasonable or more generous offer? He would let her do what she pleased, and only suggested, leaving the offer for her consideration, that she should give him two years of her society.

"I will consult George about it," she said at length.

"Soit! Let it be so. Consult this infallible George. Milly, one word of advice. Don't let George know that you think him infallible. It spoils a husband. Your mother never spoiled me in that way. Quite the contrary."

That evening George and Milly had a long and earnest talk. The proposal made by Mr. Montoro seemed really prompted by affection. After two years she might return to him. Was two years a great deal for a father to ask of his daughter? And then—one need not be quixotic, although one is a clerk in a chemical works, with prospects—there was all this great Fortune. No one doubted the existence of the Fortune, any more than they suspected Mr. Montoro of being somebody else. This Glorious Fortune! Her father might marry again; he might leave it away from his daughter; he might do anything with it. Surely it was worth a little concession to make that inheritance safe.

"I think, dear," he said at length, "I think—how can I part with you for two years?—that you ought to go."

"I think so, too, George. But I am afraid of him. I do not know why, but I am afraid of him. The Amblers will be with us. It is a great thing that Copernica is going. But I am afraid of him."

CHAPTER VI. JOHNNY AGAIN.

MILLY must go, then. For two years she would be her father's companion. It was quite right and just; the proposal was put so generously that it was impossible to refuse. Yet George came away that night from Veritas Villa in great sadness and despondency. Milly was afraid of her father. Would he suffer her to return after two years? He was afraid of the man, too. He knew not why, but he was; the sight of Mr. Montoro filled him with a kind of rage. What business had such a man with such a daughter? Some wise men hold that daughters do take after, and resemble, more the father than the mother, which is an admirable thing when the character of the father is worth preserving and copying. But in what single respect did Milly resemble her father?

Filled with these thoughts he did not at first perceive that there was a man wandering about in the middle of the road with unsteady gait, apparently the worse for drink, and looking for something. Presently this man made for him in a devious and zig-zag course, and accosted him. His voice was a little thick, but he was not too drunk to express himself. He knew what he wanted.

"Sir," he said—in fact, he did say "shir," and he ran his words together a little, and missed a syllable here and there, and omitted many of the minor words, pronouns, conjunctions, auxiliary verbs, and so forth. Let us hide these proofs of human frailty as much as possible, and print what he meant to say without dwelling too much on how he said it. We are all human, only some are more human than others. "Sir," he said, "can you tell me which is the house of Mr. Ambler?"

"Mr. Ambler's house?" George stared. "What do you want with Mr. Ambler? It is half-past ten, and they are all gone to bed. Come, you must wait to see Mr. Ambler till to-morrow. Do you want to prove that the world is square?"

The man shook his head.

"Must get up for me. Haven't seen her nigh twenty years."

"Seen whom?"

"Seen the little maid?"

"What little maid?"

"My little maid—my daughter—Milly Montoro."

"What?"

"My little maid—my dear little maid," this strange person went on repeating.

Why, it was like the burden of Milly's father's letters. They were full of "my little maid, my dear little maid?"

"Who are you, then?" George seized him by the shoulder. "Stand up," he said; "try to be sober. Pretend to be sober, man. Who the devil are you, then?"

"I'm—I'm—her father: the little maid's father—Milly's father."

"Her father? What is your name, man?"

"My name is Montoro. The Colonel called me Johnny. Real Christian-name—baptised name—is a fool of a name—Worshipful Charles."

"Good Lord!" cried George. "But you are drunk. Where do you come from?"

"The Commercial Docks, Rotherhithe. Came over from Quebec in timber-ship. Was ship's cook."

"Look here," said George. "Whoever you are, you cannot go to the house to-night, because you are drunk, and because it is late. You must, therefore, come with me."

He took the man by the arm, and led him unresisting to his own lodgings, which were not far off.

"Now," he said, turning up the gas in the sitting-room, "let me look at you." He did look, and he trembled.

The man was dressed in an old and ill-fitting suit of black cloth. I do not think there is any kind of dress in which a man may look so fearfully shabby as a suit of black. This is partly due to the fact that it is evening dress, and should suggest social cheerfulness. In the same way, no one could possibly look more melancholy than a clown by daylight outside his show and in official dress. A dress-coat, too, when it has grown old, and has seen long service in some third-class restaurant, falls into curves, lines, and folds which seem to debase and degrade the figure of man beneath. This man's whole suit, again, was disgracefully and deplorably dirty, and covered with streaks of grease. Everything was to match; he wore no collar, but had a red handkerchief tied

about his neck, and a grey flannel shirt in bags; his hat was a slouched felt of the commonest description. He took off the hat and stood in the light, a little sobered, but his eyes were heavy with drink. They were light blue eyes, unsteady and weak. He wore a long greyish beard, but his hair was brown and silky. And the reason why George trembled was not because his clothes were so shabby, but because his face was like unto the face of his sweetheart, and his eyes like her eyes, though different in expression. The laughter was like the father, and he knew—he was perfectly certain—that before him stood the man whom the other pretended to be.

"Once more—who do you say you are?"

"Worshipful Charles Montoro is my name."

"Where do you come from?"

"From Oregon, last," he replied, partly sobered by this young man's earnestness. "I came from Quebec in a timber vessel; shipped as cook."

"You came over here as cook? Where is all your money then?"

The man shook his head.

"I haven't got any money," he replied. "There was some in the bunk; the Colonel stole it."

"Where is your Fortune then?"

"I haven't got any Fortune. How should I have any?"

"What did you mean then by your letters?"

"My letters? Oh!" Then he put his hand to his head in a feeble way, trying to understand. Then he sat down looking bewildered. And presently, while George waited for further explanation, his head fell back and his eyes closed. He was asleep. And while he slept he looked still more like Milly.

The man slept all through the night; George mounting guard over him lest he should wake up and slip away. By the morning light he looked more disreputable than ever. When he awoke at seven, George took him into his own bedroom, and gave him, to begin with, a completely new rig-out, in which, at all events, he presented a respectable appearance. The man was very much subdued, and asked no questions, taking what was offered him, and doing what he was told. Apparently a gentle and amenable person. Then George gave him breakfast, and after breakfast bade him tell his story.

I suppose there never was a man, since gift of speech was first granted to humanity, who rambled in his talk so much as Johnny of Oregon; what he had to tell we already know, but George did not. He got at last, and after a thousand twistings and turnings, to the point at which the Colonel came, stayed with him a week, proved excellent company, and finally made off with the money and the letters. Then he went on:

"When the Colonel stole that money, and the letters as well, and I could not come up with him, nor hear of him anywhere, I hadn't the heart to go back to the clearin', and hung around a bit doin' odd jobs, as many are ready to do all over the States. And so somehow I worked my way back again to the east, and in the spring got to Quebec. Now when you stand on the hill at Quebec and look across to the east, it seems as if you can see all the way across the water to London. Curious that, isn't it? And what with havin' none of her letters to read, and lookin' across the water, and thinking I was gazing upon Hackney Wick, I fell to dreamin' about the little maid, and longin' to see her again."

"So you came home, and got drunk?"

"Yea, sir; that is so. Oh, I knew very well I should have to own up! And I knew what they would say; particularly Matilda's sister, P'leena, who married very well, and now keeps carriage company. It would be rough on the little maid at first to see her father such a disgraceful old pauper, and a shame to a respectable terrace to be seen loafin' around, after all I'd told her, too. First I thought I would just look over the palings like, and go away; somebody would tell me which of them she was; perhaps I'd beg a copper to carry away and remember her by. Then I thought how would it be if I made a clean breast and begged her pardon humble, and so went away again. All the journey across the ocean in that timber ship I thought about it, and what I should do. And when I got across to Poplar only this morning, I tell you, sir, I'd no more notion of what was best to be done than when I started."

"Perhaps you never have had any notion in all your life of what was best to be done."

"Perhaps not, sir. Men who see clear get on in the world. I never saw farther than the end of the job."

"But why did you get drunk?"

"Well, twasn't right; but think of it. I hadn't seen a public-house for nineteen years. They haven't got any where I've been. They've got bars, but if you want a comfortable drink with a pipe and a friend to talk to, you must come to England. I don't quite know how many public-houses there are on the straight road between this and Poplar, but I tried the drink at most, with a pipe here and a pipe there, feelin' comfortable because I was workin' my way, you see, with the little maid at the end of the way."

"And so you got disgracefully drunk. Yes—I see." There seemed no possibility of doubting or disputing the man's statements. They were told too naturally for deception. But what was to be done next?

"What is the Colonel like?"

Johnny described the man who had repaid his hospitality by stealing his money. He described him so exactly that there was little doubt in George's mind who was the personator, in spite of the discrepancies of beard and moustache.

"As for his profession, he's a sportsman," continued his informer. "He sometimes plays alone, and sometimes he's one of a gang. Sometimes he travels and plays in the cars; sometimes he goes to bars, and sometimes he keeps a gaming-saloon. There's thousands like him in the countries where I've been. Very good company they are when there's no plunderin' and cheatin' around. If there's a quarrel, which there mostly is, it's wild cats. I was a peaceful man, I was, and nobody never drew bead on me; but I've seen many a fight over the cards, and now and then a quiet man like myself got hit when the firin' begun. The best way is to roll over and lie on the floor till it's over. I remember now, once, down to——"

"Never mind that. Let us get on."

"I'm a peaceful man," he continued, repeating himself as usual; "yet if I had come across the Colonel after he stole my money, I'd have shot him. Yes, if I hanged for it. Seems now as if I don't care much about it any more. I never had any money before I found that roll of notes in the empty cabin, and I'm no worse off than I was then. P'raps I shall go back to Oregon, and live in the cabin again by myself when I've seen the little maid. It's quiet living all by yourself. When you go about in gangs there's no such things as getting an hour's quiet, and a peaceful man loves to be quiet. Lord! if you'd heard

the language I had to hear every day, you'd like a few years' quiet. No; I don't care so much about the money, and of course the Colonel has lost it all by this time."

"You want to see your daughter. I will help you, but on conditions. First, I must tell you that I am going to marry her."

"You are going to marry my little maid?" He stared in great amazement. "Why, she can't——"

"I am sure," said George, "that she has not remained a baby in arms for nineteen years. Yes; I am going to marry her. And it seems to me that the sooner I do it the better."

"Well, sir, it's real friendly of you, and I hope she'll make a good wife, and that you'll treat her kindly. But I do assure you, sir, that it is not my wish nor my intention to disgrace my daughter by staying at home. No, sir, a clerk I was once, with three pound a week, and therefore a gentleman. But I've had that knocked out of me long ago, and now I'm only a common loafer and tramp, except when I'm on my clearin' in Oregon, and the whiskey-bottle's most always too much for me. She sha'n't blush for her father, sir. Not after the first go-off, after I've had to own up. Tell me, sir, does she think much about the Fortune? Does she want money sent home to her to keep up her position like her poor mother?"

"No, she does not. She believes—or did believe until the other day—that you are dead, and your Fortune all lost, or fallen into wrong hands. The loss of what she did not expect will certainly not grieve her much—not half so much as to learn that her father, of whom she has learnt to think so tenderly, is a man who—finds a whiskey-bottle most always too much for him."

The man hung his head like a school-boy receiving reproof.

"Yes," he said, "I mustn't stay at home. That's a fact. Can't I go over this morning and have it out with her, and go away again?"

"No," George replied with energy, "you cannot. It is one of the conditions I make with you. You are to stay here quietly, for a week if necessary; you must not go out unless I go with you. You must not make any attempt at all to speak with her. Do you promise?"

The man hesitated.

"If you will not," said George, "I will make you put on again those disgraceful

clothes—I will give you a bottle of whiskey, and turn you into the road; you can then drink yourself blind drunk, and stagger off to find your daughter, and make her have you marched off to the station as a drunken vagabond."

The man shuddered and trembled.

"I will do," he replied, "whatever you tell me."

"Very well then. Stay at home—here—until I come back. You may smoke a pipe all day long if you like, but there is no drink. Do you promise?"

"Yes, sir; I will do what you order. I wouldn't shame the little maid."

"Very good. But just tell me what you did it for? What was the good of deceiving her about your success?"

"Well, now"—he had grafted a kind of American drawl upon a full and rich cockney twang, the result of which gave a peculiar flavour to his speech—"well, now," he said slowly, "put it to yourself. Here's a child at home taught to believe her father a lazy and idle fellow with no smartness. Her mother taught her that, likely. Here's a father a good many miles away who wants that child to stick out her chin like girls who have pride in their parents, as some do, not only in Stamford Hill, but also Tottenham, and many other places. Nothin' makes a girl proud and haughty, and therefore happy, as being sure she's got a great and noble father. I remember them in church on a Sunday morning, their father being perhaps an alderman, and perhaps a common-councilman. What does that father do? Twice a year he borrows a sheet of paper, and on the Sabbath when the rest are asleep or playin' monty, he sits and writes to that daughter letters which shall make her proud and happy. Do you call that, sir, doin' of a parent's duty, or do you not?"

George did a very unusual thing that morning. He asked for a week's holiday, and was granted it.

He began his week by a very busy and important morning. First, he had a long conference with Mr. Richard Ambler, in which many things of interest were considered and action resolved upon.

"Remember," said the solicitor, "you have to protect Milly against the real man as well as against the pretender. And suppose the real man wants to sell her houses and pocket the money?"

"He will not," said George.

"I do not know. Perhaps he will not

be tempted. As for Reginald, leave him to me. Professor of Astronomy indeed! But what is the use of fooling poor Reginald? And to think that not one of us suspected the fellow! Now go, and lose no time. We have the rogue safe enough, but I do not know yet if we can proceed against him criminally."

"At all events, he stole the notes."

"Yes, yes, but it was in Oregon, and perhaps they might ask to whom these notes belonged; on the whole, it is a tangled business. He has attempted to defraud in instructing me to sell the property, but in doing this he injures not me nor his daughter, but the rightful owner, who is this man, Montoro himself, and from your account I should say he would not be a likely man to become a prosecutor or give good evidence."

"The limpest weed of a man you ever saw," said George.

In the evening George came home. His prisoner had been asleep most of the day, and had obediently kept within the house.

"Very good," said George, "I will now reward you."

He took him out, and walked in the direction of Veritas Villa. At this time, in these summer evenings, the Discoverer's family were generally in the garden playing lawn-tennis. This evening they were all on the lawn together, Milly with them, playing. There was only a low wooden paling over which one could easily look without the appearance of curiosity or impertinence.

"There," said George, "is your daughter. Not the little girl with the glasses; she is only fifteen, and Mr. Ambler's daughter. The taller girl. Look at her well. In a day or two you shall speak to her."

The man looked his best. When George, a few minutes later, drew him away, the tears were running down his face.

"I see," said George, "that your story is true. You are really Milly's father. But I was certain of it from the beginning."

CHAPTER VII. TILL TO-MORROW.

THE next morning George greatly astonished the inhabitants of Veritas Villa, by paying them a visit in the morning, a thing never known before. He explained that, as he had a holiday, he thought he would just look round and see them. His cousin Reginald was in the map-room! He would go there.

He found the Discoverer, aided by Copernica, spectacles on nose, busily engaged in cataloguing books, looking through letters, rolling up maps, and between these labours making notes for that great inaugural lecture which was to revolutionise astronomical research, in America first, and the old world next. It was already a voluminous mass of notes—the Philosopher belonging to the school which thinks that the longer they make their utterances the more likely they are to be listened to. In the same way the scholars of the Renaissance used to believe that the bigger their books the more certain would be their immortality. And there are not wanting poets of this very century who also believe that the more they write the better they will be loved and preserved, and their memory kept green. As for novelists, they do not count, because nobody ever supposes that a picture of life can be thought worthy of preservation—lucky those who get read by their own generation.

"Come in, come in, George," cried Reginald cheerily. "Here we are, hard at work—hard at work. I expect we shall have to sail in a week or two—as soon, that is, as we can sell off our sticks and get rid of the house. I am writing my inaugural lecture. This, George," he added with great seriousness, "is the most important piece of work, I am convinced, that I have ever yet been called upon to do. In it I have to strike a note, such a note as shall be at once an alarm and a message of Truth, and an echo"—he did not explain how an alarm could be all these—"yes, and shall re-echo through the length and breadth of the land, from the North Pole to the—to the mysterious ice caverns of the Outer Rim. A college class, George, is a very serious thing, it is a sacred thing. I may regard my own as a collection of empty vessels waiting to be filled, or as so many canals which have to irrigate a thirsty country, or as so many springs of Truth. Ought we not, myself and Copernica, who shall be my assistant lecturer, to consider ourselves as instruments appointed for the spreading of Truth, or even prophets?"

Copernica blushed and gasped, and adjusted her glasses.

"Ought we not, I say——"

"You certainly ought," George replied, rudely interrupting. "But, Reginald—I will not stop your work many minutes—are you quite sure that it is wise to build upon this offer, to jump at the conclusion

that you ought to accept it, to be so certain of going?"

"Why, George," the Discoverer smiled, "as regards the wisdom of the step, I may be allowed to be the best judge; as regards the certainty of going, I have already accepted the offer."

"Yes, yes; but, Reginald, are you quite sure"—here George looked confused—"that it is a genuine offer?"

"Genuine offer! What do you mean, George? The offer is made by Mr. Montoro himself—by Milly's own father. Surely I can trust Milly's father?"

"Yes, I believe you can trust Milly's father."

George could not help saying this.

"When he offers me such a post, what can I do but accept with gratitude?"

"Why," George replied, "it is ungracious to look a gift horse in the mouth, but I think, if I were you, I would first find out where the college is."

"It is in Nevada, near the city of Colorado. I know where it is."

"In Nevada. Yes, yes. That is a long way off. Would it not be prudent first to get the prospectus, papers, calendar, or whatever the college has got to prove its existence?"

"Now, George." Mr. Ambler was really annoyed at this appearance of distrust. "In Milly's father's hands I am quite safe. 'He is bound to us,' he kindly says, 'by bonds of gratitude,' though Heaven knows Milly has done ten times as much for us as we have done for her. It is all quite settled. I have told Cousin Dick to have my Funds sold out, and placed to my credit in the bank. When we get out, Mr. Montoro is going to invest the money for us at ten or twelve per cent. Think of that, after a beggarly three! Milly is going with us." George started. He had not quite realised what this meant. "Going too. We shall be quite a family-party. George! What are you swearing for? and what are you banging the table for?" Because George suddenly remembered that he had only the night before agreed to entrust Milly to this villain's care for two years.

"George," said Copernica, frightened, "don't look like that. What is the matter? Because Milly is to go away for two years? Oh, for shame!"

He made a desperate effort, and controlled himself.

"I want you seriously, Reginald," he said, speaking calmly, "to consider the possibility of your not going at all."

"I cannot."

"Oh, George," said Copernica, "when he has got the chance at last of spreading the Truth all over the world."

"He can spread the Truth just as well—better even—from Veritas Villa," replied George cruelly. "Reginald," he repeated, "you must renounce this project."

"What! and give up my professorship?"

"Why, George?" asked Copernica. "Why is he to renounce the project?"

"Because—because there is a very good reason, but I cannot tell you to-day."

"If there is a good reason," Copernica insisted, "all the more reason for telling it at once."

"No. But think, Reginald, what would the place be to you even if it were all that has been represented to you? An obscure college, in a new, far-off American town, a place where your voice would not reach beyond the walls of the lecture-room with its half-dozen students. Call that an opening? Why, here in London you address the whole world. Everybody looks to London. Things said and written in London go over the whole world. You are at the head of a society, growing"—here he stammered, but held on bravely—"growing daily and rapidly in importance. You know that they are afraid of you at the universities. If you were in America you would be out of their way; they would fear you no longer. They ask for nothing better than your removal. Mr. Montoro is playing into their hands. As for your society it would fall to pieces, and your theories would be set aside, and speedily forgotten, while you were eating out your heart in obscurity. It would be exactly as if you had never lived, while, after your death, some one would take up your ideas and steal them, and bring them over here and pretend that they were his own. But here you live like a king—like a king," he repeated mendaciously. "You control the scientific world, you keep your trembling opponents in perpetual terror; they are obliged to have recourse to every kind of disreputable dodge which you defeat; they try to close one avenue, you open another. This incessant activity frightens them; it confounds them; they never know on what side they are next to be attacked. Consider this, my dear Reginald."

"George," murmured the girl, "you don't mean it. You have never talked like this before. If only you meant it,

you would be a Recruit, and the best we have ever had."

"I mean every word," he replied, though he felt that his name ought to have been written Ananias—"every word I have said. And as for you, Copernica, instead of crying out upon me for being unkind, you ought to be backing your father up, and making him feel that his right place is where he is sitting, in his wooden chair in the map-room at Veritas Villa, ready to fight with all comers."

"But what does it mean?" asked Reginald blankly. "Tell us only what you mean."

"I cannot to-day. But I will tell you to-morrow morning. Meantime, for Heaven's sake cease to build your hopes upon this project!"

"As for the honour of Mr. Montoro—" Reginald began, but stopped short, because, to his amazement, George began to clench his fist, grind his teeth, jump about the room, and show all the external signs of a wrath which can be only appeased and satisfied by the kickings, whackings, and free fights of the good old times.

Some day—we may not live to see it—we shall return to that excellent method of our ancestors. There are many men with whom one would like to have it out "en champ cloa." I should, myself, enormously enjoy contemplating my enemy after I had taken the conceit out of him with a battle-axe.

This entanglement with Reginald Ambler was difficult to understand. What did the man want? To get them all out in America away from their friends, and to rob them? It must be that. Or was it possibly pure devilry and wanton mischief? Not the latter, certainly. The Colonel was not at all the man to perpetrate such a gigantic hoax. One may imagine Theodore Hook doing such a thing if he had got the chance and it occurred to him; and how he would have made a song about it, and how they would all have laughed over their punch in the delicate and feeling manner of their time at the fine situation of the broken-hearted enthusiast. But not the Colonel; he did not desire to laugh—had not laughed, in fact, for something like twenty years, that is to say, ever since he began to live on his wits. Those savages of Ceylon, who never laugh, and only begin to smile when they are defunct and ghosts, live on their wits, which accounts for their melancholy. What the Colonel was contriving was pure rascality and

robbery. In order to set up his gaming-saloon in the best style he wanted as much money to begin with as he could command. And he saw his way to getting a good large haul out of Reginald Ambler. However, George said no more, but left them abruptly. Then Copernica burst into tears, and threw herself into her father's arms.

"Oh, papa dear, what is it? what does he mean?"

"I do not know, child. How should I know? Is George gone mad?"

No; she shook her head. George was certainly not gone mad.

"There is something behind," she cried; "George does not talk at random. Oh, what is it?"

"I would stake my life," said her father shortly, "on Mr. Montoro's honour. Why—is George silly? Here comes home a man who has been so busy for twenty years making a great Fortune that he has never even had time to come home before; he is changed, of course. No one expected in a rich millionaire the manner of a clerk, which he was before he went out. Everybody says he was once a very meek and humble creature. He isn't now. But so rich and successful a man can afford to be a little overbearing. He comes home, then——"

"Father," said Copernica desperately, "we may go on talking till to-morrow morning, when George is to tell us what he means. Talk as much as we like, we shall get no further forward. Shall we try and make believe that the whole thing is a dream, and that we shall not go out at all, so that we shall feel the blow less?"

"I can't, my dear," her father replied. "I think I must go out to America or somewhere else and have my say, or choke. Here no one will listen to me."

"They wouldn't listen to Galileo."

"I wish they never had. But as for me, I must speak. And this is my only chance."

"To-morrow morning—let us wait till to-morrow morning. At any rate, papa dear, if the worst were to happen—that is to say, if we could not go—we should be exactly the same as we were before Mr. Montoro came. But, oh, it is impossible!"

"It is impossible," said her father, trying to feel the confidence of his words; "George has got a bee in his bonnet. Many chemists get bees in their bonnets. Let us go on with our work, Copernica. Let us lose no time. The college must find us prepared."

But his hand shook, and his brain was troubled.

For there was a thing which he had not told.

On the morning before, Mr. Montoro had held with him a last conference on the subject of the college and the chair; he gave him a paper of instructions how to get to Colorado, showing what would be the cost of the journey, the time taken, and the best way there. It was a paper calculated to carry conviction to the mind of the most suspicious, even a Yankee lawyer. In fact, there is nothing which one man cannot persuade another to believe if he gets him quiet and away from his fellow-creatures. In the smoking-room of a club, for instance, nobody believes anybody. In the retirement of the Discoverer's map-room, the Colonel's lies, ingeniously constructed, were accepted without the least suspicion.

"And now, my dear friend," said Mr. Montoro finally, "I think we have settled everything. I cannot tell you with what satisfaction I look upon the fact that we have secured you for our new college. The possession of genius in our Professorial Chairs is, above all, the great thing wanted for a new Institution. Oh yes, to be sure, I had almost forgotten. About your own money matters. Have you arranged them?"

"I have written to my cousin, who manages my affairs, to sell out my stock and pay the amount to my account in the bank."

"Yes; that is well. We can get you better interest across the water. How are you going to bring it with you?"

"I do not quite know," replied the Philosopher, who had thought of tying it up in gold, and so bringing it in his pocket.

"Let me advise you," said Mr. Montoro. "If you are sure you can quite trust me—actually trust me—I will pay it into my own account, giving you a note or receipt for it, which will make you quite safe. You can give me a cheque payable to bearer, and I will save you all further trouble about it."

This was a perfectly faithful promise. He fully intended to save Mr. Ambler and his family all trouble about the money for the future.

He then sat down and calculated the cost of the journey, with a margin; he was very particular about the margin, so as to allow ample room, he said, for possible

emergencies. This done, he subtracted the total amount from the sum lying to Mr. Ambler's credit.

"There," he said pleasantly, "it is a real comfort for me to be of a little assistance as a practical man to a Genius and a Philosopher. Draw me the cheque, payable to bearer—so. When did you order the sale of the stock? Yes, I do not think the money will be paid to your credit till the day after to-morrow. Then I should think—but that matters nothing to you. So, sign the cheque—Reginald Ambler. Shake hands, my dear friend. I believe firmly that you will always consider this as the very luckiest day in all your life. Courage! The way of glory lies plain and clear before you. Of glory? Ay, and of wealth and success to your boys. For I shall take care of them all. Yes, I charge myself with them."

It was the memory of this cheque and what it might mean, because the poor man knew nothing about stopping cheques, that lay on the Discoverer's conscience as heavy as lead.

George sought Milly, who was, if one may confess a thing which should not be a cause of shame, in the kitchen making gooseberry jam. This is a conserve favourably regarded by the youthful palate, and is cheap. To the adult who is picksome, the jelly of Siberian crab, which is soft and silky to the palate—as they say, of claret and of tea—is preferable, and so is the preserve made of blackberries, which is full-flavoured and fragrant, yet fresh from the wood.

"Milly, my dear," he said cheerfully, though he was oppressed with the thing he had to face, "you look delightful in a white apron, and your fingers are so sticky that you are defenceless."

"George," she said demurely, "did you stay away from business on purpose to kiss me?"

"Not quite, dear child. On the contrary, I have a great deal to say to you. First of all, I have made my cousin Reginald miserable, and Copernica as well."

"Oh! But why?"

"Next, I am going to make you, not miserable, but full of wonder. My dear Milly, a very strange and most unexpected thing has happened. I do not think I ought to tell you to-day what that is. Indeed, you must not hint or let fall the slightest suspicion that anything at all has happened."

"Has it anything to do, George, with—with my father?"

"A good deal, Milly. But ask me no more."

"Yes, tell me; is it anything against him? I told you, George, that I do not love him as I ought to love my father, but——"

"But his honour is a sacred thing, Milly. There is nothing against your father's honour that I know of. Yet remember that Mr. Montoro does not know that, and must not be told, or allowed for a moment to suspect, until to-morrow."

"It looks like conspiring against one's own father; but I do not expect that he will come here to-day."

"It is not that, Milly, as you will see to-morrow. It is conspiring for him."

"George, I do not understand in the least. To-morrow! Why, he is coming here to-morrow, to meet Mr. Richard about the sale of the houses. Oh, my poor houses! I am so sorry they are to be sold."

"I don't think they will be sold," said George.

"And to-morrow I am to drive about London, to buy fine things for my outfit."

"Perhaps you will not take that drive," said George mysteriously.

"And I had a letter to-day from my aunt Paulina. She has not seen me for four years, but I told her, when I wrote last, that my father had returned, and she is coming here to-morrow to see him. 'Congratulate him,' she says, 'on his splendid success, and we shall always be pleased to see him, and you with him, at Wimbledon.'"

George laughed.

"I am glad your aunt is coming. It will be another agreeable surprise for your father. Does he know?"

"No, he does not. I only got the letter this morning. He has always declared that he does not desire to see any of his relations."

"Shall you send him the letter?"

"Why," said Milly, "my father has never even told me where he is staying."

"I can tell you that, if you want to know. Stay, I will tell you to-morrow."

"George, you are most mysterious. Tell me, is this a bad thing that has——"

"No, not a bad thing. It is such a good thing, Milly, that had it not happened——his face darkened——"I would have wished you lying dead and buried in the graveyard, and myself beside you. Oh, my dear," again he clenched his fist, and

looked like one who thirsts for another man's blood, "it is such a good thing that we shall have to go in humble gratitude for it all the rest of our lives."

"And I shall leave it to-morrow? Why, George, what can it be? It is not money—nothing to do with money would make you wish me dead. And you say that it does not affect my father's honour. Why, what can it be?"

"You shall learn it to-morrow. But for to-day, Milly, can you trust me?"

"Why, George dear," she said, throwing her arm round his neck—it was not true that her fingers were sticky—"George, if I cannot trust you, whom am I to trust?"

"Then, my darling, obey me for exactly four-and-twenty hours, and I will obey you for all my life to come. Listen, my dear."

He whispered.

The effect of that whisper could not be equalled even by the gallery in St. Paul's Cathedral. Milly blushed, and then turned pale; first her eyes looked startled and frightened; next, they became soft; first she opened her mouth, and gasped; then her lips trembled, and gradually settled into a smile.

"George," she said, "do you mean this?"

For reply he drew out a document and showed it to her. She read it through and blushed again. It was a formal document, the nature of which became evident to her after the first few words of preamble.

"But I sail the day after to-morrow."

"Do you think, my dear, that I am going to let you go?"

"But what am I to say? Oh, George, what will my father say?"

"He will approve—he will consent; and yet you will not go to America with him."

"Oh, I am in a dream!"

"Do you consent, then, my dear?"

She gave him both her hands.

"Yes, George, only tell me what to do."

"You have only to come to my rooms to-morrow morning at ten. Bring Copernica—poor little maid!—with you, and say nothing—not one word—to any one, my dear. I cannot rest for thinking that you are not yet under my protection. Only one day more to wait. You cannot be carried off in one day."

"Who is to carry me off, George?"

"There is only one man, my dear, who would try, but he is possessed of many devils. Kiss me, and trust me, and say nothing."

All that day there was a restraint at

Veritas Villa, and an uneasy feeling that something or other was going to happen. Copernica went on with her task of cataloguing, but without heart; the Discoverer continued to sit before the notes of his inaugural lecture, but somehow his enthusiasm was, for the moment, quenched. He even fell into one of those fits of despondency which sometimes, but rarely, filled his mind with the blackness of despair, because at those times a mocking voice asked him how it was that he could never account for a lunar eclipse. What should he say, when his class asked him how, on his system, he could produce an eclipse of the moon?

"Father," said Copernica at length, "it is no use trying to work. George meant something—he never talks idly; but let us put the things away and go for a walk." She took her father to the banks of the river, where they wandered in a mood of settled gloom. The child tried to raise her father's spirits by pointing out the many proofs of the earth's flatness which could be gathered from the prospect around them. In fact anyone who contemplates the Wanstead Marshes long enough cannot fail of arriving at the conclusion that the earth is as flat as a pancake. But the Discoverer remained dejected. Was the cup to be dashed away from his lips at the very moment of fruition? Was he really to go on in the old half-hearted way, making a Recruit now and then, courting contempt, being held up to ridicule? And then—the recollection of that cheque lay at his heart. Yet if one could not trust Milly's father, in whom was trust to be placed?

To-morrow—to-morrow he was to know.

One person remained to be prepared. This was the unfortunate Johnny. George took him in the afternoon to see his old haunts. They visited together the places which he had known in the old days: the cottage where he brought home his young wife, and was happy before the sister married into carriage company, and the baneful passion of envy was aroused; the church where he once held part of a pew; the tavern, where there had been a club, to which he went once a week, when there was a sing-song. Johnny—whom it is impossible to call Mr. Montoro—shed tears in thinking of that weekly sing-song. Then they took train—in the old days it was an omnibus—to the City, and gazed at the exterior of the house where he had once been a clerk. When the man's heart was

thus softened with the past, George began to prepare him for the morrow.

"I have kept you a prisoner all this time," he said, "partly for your own sake. Tell me, what would happen if you had met the Colonel in America?"

"I should have shot him," he replied. "Oh yes! I know I should have shot him; I felt exactly like shooting him."

"If you were to meet him here in England, what would you do?"

"There would be a fight," he said courageously. "Yes, I think—I'm most sure there'd be a fight, because I'm bound to call him a thief, and the Colonel is not a man likely to stand that—you lay your last dollar he isn't. So there must be a fight, you see."

"It would be a poor sort of a fight," said George. "Well, suppose you heard that the Colonel was calling himself by your name——"

"What'd he do that for?"

"Suppose he went to Mr. Ambler's house and said he was Mr. Montoro, and that Milly was his daughter, and sold her houses, and told her to go over to America with him."

"With him! Go with him!" The man became pale, and trembled in all his limbs. "The little maid go with him!"

"That is exactly what he has done."

Then Johnny began to swear. Mild as he was, he had learned to swear after the manner of the American rough and rowdy. He swore at the Colonel so terribly that George thought he would have some kind of fit. He swore so long that George thought he would never finish.

"Come," he said at length, "if you hadn't already sworn enough for ten men, I would ask you to say it all over again for me. Now, I warn you, to-morrow you will meet that identical villain. What are you going to do?"

"Why," Johnny replied slowly, "he hasn't got the little maid, has he? 'Twould be very different if he had. And he hasn't got the money for them houses, has he? So, mister, I think, as I'm a peaceful man, I shall kind o' let him go. The Colonel's a terrible man to fight. It's a great thing to be peaceful—kind o' gets a man on in the world."

"Yes," said George, "you are a beautiful example, are you not?"

"But," said Johnny, "about them notes. Yes, I am afraid there may be a fight."

Poor Milly! Her luck in fathers was very bad. George wondered which of the

twain, on the whole, was the most undesirable. Difficult to honour either of them—and there is an old-world prejudice that it is better to be a sturdy rogue than a coward. If the Colonel was a rogue he was sturdy. If Johnny was indifferent honest, he was a most dreadful coward.

CHAPTER VIII. WHO GIVETH AWAY THIS WOMAN?

"I KNEW," said Copernica, when Milly asked her to put on her hat and go for a walk with her, "I knew that something would happen to-day, and I knew it would be something to do with you, because George was in it. And it will be something to do with Mr. Montoro, because papa is in it. Yes, Milly dear, I will be ready in a minute. As for poor papa, he has not slept a wink all night, but walked about groaning, and this morning he is sitting all of a heap-like among the boxes. And, oh, good gracious, Milly! you've got on your white frock and white gloves. What in the world——"

"Come," said Milly, smiling; "you shall know in half an hour as much as I know myself. Why, dear, as to what it all means, I know no more than you. But something has happened—something which is to make us grateful all our days, George says, and to-day we shall learn what it is."

"But, why white frock and white gloves?" Copernica persisted. "It is like a wedding."

"Yes, dear," Milly blushed, "it is terribly like a wedding, is it not?"

First, they went to George's lodgings. This was in itself a remarkable thing, because George should have been at his business. But he was not, he was standing at the garden-gate waiting for them. With him were two gentlemen—one of them Copernica's cousin, Mr. Richard; the other, a strange man—not a gentleman, exactly, to judge by his look, which was downcast and shy, as if he was dressed in a suit of clothes too good for him; and really, when Copernica, who was sharp of observation, brought her eyes to bear upon that stranger's dress, she became conscious that he was dressed in George's clothes, which made her feel as if she was in a dream. She was certain of it—quite certain of it—she knew the pattern and recognised the cut. Who was this strange man, who must needs borrow a suit of George's clothes? Had he turned up with nothing to wear? And when he lifted his head and looked round him—in a furtive,

ashamed kind of way—the child's brain became suddenly troubled, because he reminded her of somebody—she knew not, for the moment, who it could be. This more than ever made her feel like being in a dream.

This uncanny ghost-like feeling may be arrived at any day by walking about the streets of London at twilight, when you just catch a glimpse—no more—of the faces as they pass, and find your mind presently filled with odd fancies and vague, sorrowful suggestions. You have seen—you remember when they have passed you—faces which reminded you of dead friends. The procession of London faces is endless; as one grows older the streets become more and more filled with the faces of the dead; so that one thinks sometimes that this marching in procession beside the living may be one form of purgatory; and one trembles to think that if we were to grow very old indeed, the procession of faces in a crowded street would be wholly composed of dead men. To this girl, the face of the strange man suggested likeness to some one, a feeling of having seen it before somewhere; and it made her uncomfortable. George did not introduce him to them; took no notice of him; and merely nodded to him when he said that it was time to be moving.

They formed a little procession. George and Milly went first; Mr. Richard and Copernica came next; and the stranger followed behind, saying nothing, but hanging his head with every appearance of great dejection.

It was only a part of the general mystery and strangeness, and, therefore, it did not in the least surprise Copernica that they walked all the way to Hackney Church, and went up the steps, observing the same order.

But in the porch of that great square Saratoga, or travelling-trunk, which does duty for a parish church, George stopped and said:

"Milly dear, I thought you would like to be married in the same church as your father and mother."

"Aye," said the stranger in a low voice, "it was in this very same church, twenty-one years ago. And Matilda in pink."

Then Milly was going to be married. That was one of the things. But why? And where was her father? And George looking as serious as if he was going to a funeral. At weddings people ought to laugh and be happy, she thought, being as

yet young and ignorant, and not thinking that from weddings spring most of the ills which do afflict humanity; such as a lean purse, a nagging tongue, household troubles, sick children, bad sons, disappointing daughters, distraction of peace, abolition of comfort, and many others. It is true that there is the chance of great blessings; such as—— But they are known to everybody, and at the outset we all expect them, and mean to have them, and shape our course accordingly. But what, Copernica wondered, what in the world did this mysterious person mean by saying, "Matilda in pink"? Who was Matilda?

Then they went into the church. There were already assembled the People, represented—as is the way with the People on state occasions, because they are all busy outside, toiling and moiling—by their elected and trusted functionaries, the verger and the pew-opener. And a curate was in the vestry putting on his robes of office.

They walked up the aisle and stood before the altar, and presently the clergyman came out of the vestry, and took his place, book in hand, and began the service. The words echoed mockingly in the great empty church. Copernica would have cried had not at the very beginning the stranger dressed in George's clothes begun to snuffle and to shed tears, which made her ashamed of being in his company. Why should he cry? What business had he with the wedding at all? She would have liked to whisper her opinion of this conduct to her cousin Dick Ambler, but he looked as serious as George, and bore himself as if weeping strangers in other people's clothes belonged to every wedding, like the dreadful old skeleton which was always present at the feast, though it was good manners to take no manner of notice of it.

Another wonderful thing. When the clergyman asked, "Who giveth away this woman?" the stranger it was who officiously stepped forward and performed this duty which Cousin Dick should have done, and he did it, too, with a most indecent choke and gulp, murmuring irreverently, "You bet I do," which is not in the prayer-book. And then to the end of the service he never took his eyes from the bride, who regarded him not at all, and seemed not to know that he was present, being wholly occupied with the overwhelming fact that she was being swiftly converted into a wife. She had her heart's desire—not quite in the way she had expected, which

was a way of festivity and good wishes, but she had her desire. Therefore she ought to have been happy. But, oh, what would her father say? And what about that promise to go with him for two years? Yet George assured her that her father would actually consent. Why, how could that be? But she was married, the ring was on her finger, and the words were said; yet she was afraid—a girl on such an occasion wants to have her spirits kept up by the gathering of her friends; no one likes to be married in an absolutely empty church; it was like some uncared-for creature to be married with no one to support her except Copernica, and even her own father not present.

When they went to the vestry to sign the strange man came with them, and signed his name after the bride, but she did not read his signature.

Then the ceremony was complete, and Copernica fell into the bride's arms and kissed and hugged her.

"Oh, Milly, Milly," she said, "what does it mean? Are you to stay while we go away without you? And what will your father say, and what will he do? Will he take you away with him just the same?"

"What should he do?" interposed the stranger huskily. "It isn't for the likes of him to carry sweet maids away to America. Don't you take on, miss. He never meant it. Not for one minute did he think of doing such a thing."

"Come, Milly dear," said George; "you have got to listen to a little story before you go home—I mean, before you go back to your old home. Your home is with me now, thank Heaven! You will come too, Copernica. It is a strange story, not very terrible, but it might have been."

So they all went back again. There was no wedding-breakfast prepared, no champagne or drinking of healths, or wishing of joy, or throwing of rice, or looking up of old shoes. Not at all. They went silently into George's room, and stood looking at each other, and especially at the stranger, whose face betokened the most painful shame and confusion.

"Now," Mr. Richard said to him, "you have got something to tell us and something to confess. Try to tell your story straight through if you can. You had better begin at once. Milly, sit down and listen. We will all sit down."

They did so, leaving the unfortunate man standing before them just like a culprit schoolboy.

"I s'pose I must begin somewheres," he said feebly.

When this man was a clerk in the City he used not to say "somewheres," but "somewhere." He had lost, among other things, the art of speaking correctly, and now spoke as his companions for so many years habitually spoke. It is terrifying to think that any one of us, under similar conditions, would probably experience the same losses, and come, in time, to speak like a Cockney coster or a Californian rough.

In spite of the respectable clothes he wore—Milly herself now perceived with wonder that they were borrowed plumes—the poor man had so dejected and hang-dog a look that one felt sorry for him. But by this time she quite understood that something more unexpected even than her own wedding was to happen, and now she connected this walking Mystery in George's tweeds with the unexpected, than which, as we know, nothing is more certain.

"When I went away," this mysterious person began slowly, and as if feeling for his facts, "I thought, being a fool and inexperienced, that if you wanted money all you had to do was to go to America, where you would be sure to find it. Everybody, I thought, got rich in the States. It was only the trouble of going there and pickin' up the dollars. Lord! what a fool I was! Don't none of you believe it. America's the biggest fraud out. If anybody gets rich, it's the Americans themselves. You've got to work there harder than at home. If there's any easy places they're grabbed by the natives. Look at me. I gave up three pound a week to go out and make a Fortune. Did I ever get that three pound a week again? Did I ever get another easy place? Don't you think it?"

"Isn't this," asked Mr. Richard unfeelingly, "rather a roundabout way of beginning?"

Copernica looked from Milly to the speaker, and back again. Strange, he was like Milly!

"Thank you, sir," the man replied humbly. "I'm comin' round to what I want to say. Lemme go my own way, if you please. Though if you've a better way, tell me that way, and I will go that way."

"You shall go any way you please," said George, "if only you'll get to the end somehow."

"Thank you, sir," he replied, "you are

the only man as has said a kind word to me for twenty years, and I'm bound to please that man if I can"—he kept looking at Milly furtively—"especially since he's husband of the little maid." Milly started. "Very well, then. Hard berths I got, not easy at all. Sometimes it would be porter's work at a store. Did I expect when I gave up a most gentlemanly desk to go rolling casks of treacle? Did I expect to load the steamboats with wood? Did I go out there to do odd chores around, a day's work here, and another there, with a spade and a hoe, or a crowbar and a hammer? I've been a navvy on a railway; I've dug graves for a cemetery; I've cut wood and stacked it. All the hard jobs I had to do, while the natives spread themselves out around the stoves and put up their feet. That's the way they reward a man who gives up three pound a week to go out to them; that's the kind of Fortune they let him make; that's the kind of friend America is—a dollar and a half a day and leave it if you don't like it: there's plenty of tramps on the road will take it; that's what I gave up my berth for; that's what Matilda"—Milly started—"my wife, Matilda, sent me out for—said I was bound to be ambitious. Told me I ought to soar."

"George," said Milly quickly, "who is this man?"

"Wait a moment, dear. Go on, if you can," he said to the speaker. "I suppose we shall get to something in time. Patience, Milly dear."

"I know who he is," said Copernica, nodding her head. "I am sure I know. He gave her away. Oh, I see now!"

"Well," he continued, "at first I thought this was only the beginning—kind of a rough, hearty, free and easy welcome to new comers; presently I should get the hang of things, and then I should begin to make that Fortune. By this time I was as ambitious as Matilda could have wished, because I wanted badly to get back that three pound a week with store clothes and a stove-pipe hat. Then, I concluded she'd be the least mite anxious about me, and so I wrote her a letter. And just to make her mind easy and to prevent her from falling into one of her tempers, which she certainly would have done if she'd known I was just then rollin' molasses, tyin' up sugar, heavin' logs, and countin' candles, I just told her I was soarin' already to unexpected heights, and the dollars comin' in wonderful. No countin'. I wrote like

America. She wrote back, by return post, that I was to send all the money home as fast as I made it. I said 'twas all wanted for the big business I was carrying on, and bounced the more because I saw she was ashamed of having thought me such a poor weak creature. The more I bounced, the more she was ashamed, and kept a wantin' to come out, and bring the little maid with her."

"George," cried Milly again, "who is this man?" But George made no reply.

"I know who he is," repeated Copernica; "I am certain I know. 'Matilda was in pink.' Oh, I know."

"When a man begins to lie, it seems kind of impossible to go back on himself; so I kept it up, and when Matilda died, I carried on the same tale with the little maid, who I can't believe to be grown up so tall and handsome, and married before my very eyes."

"George," cried Milly for the third time, and springing to her feet, "tell me, who is he?"

"My dear, he is your father—not the other man at all. This is your father."

"Yes, my dear," the man repeated humbly, "your father, and you are the little maid as I've written so many letters to, and told so many lies about the Glorious Fortune."

"I said I knew," Copernica murmured. "Her father; but I wonder who the other is. You can't have two fathers."

"My father!" A month before Milly would have jumped into his arms first, and remarked his hang-dog look and poverty-stricken appearance afterwards. But I suppose there is only a limited amount of what may be called the impulse of affection in the human heart. At all events, her own did not leap up at all, nor did she show any signs of joy, but held her husband's hand more tightly, looking at this colossal American failure, the man who had been twenty years wriggling at the lowest depths, and could never wriggle any higher, and she repeated with much more wonder than joy: "My father!"

"I am, indeed," he said. "I would have liked to come home in silks and satins and gold rings, but I never had any luck. I would have sent the little maid all the money she could wish if I'd had it. But I hadn't got any to send."

"George," cried Milly, "if this is my father, who is—the other?"

"The other, my dear, is a—— what you shall presently learn."

"But—but I have kissed him, and I was going away with him."

"You were," replied Mr. Richard, who, to his honour be it said, had been witnessing the proceedings with more than professional interest, though the morning's work would certainly be charged in the bill. "If it had not been for this discovery you would have gone with him. Fortunately we are in time to save not only you from this danger, but also your fortune from destruction."

"He must be a rogue and a cheat," Copernica said in a low voice. "Then all he told us and all he promised us were lies. O—h! But I knew who this one was directly he began to speak. And this is what we were to learn this morning. And George knew it yesterday."

"My darling," said George, taking his wife's hand, "you understand now why I wanted to marry you at once. If it rains fathers they cannot harm you now or take you from me. As for this one, I think he will not try to harm you. He is very different from the other. To begin with, he quite understands"—George shook his left forefinger in the direction of the man as if he were a lecturer in a show and pronouncing a discourse upon a giant, a dwarf, or a monster—"he quite understands that, after the life he has led, the way he came home, the habits—the habits, I say"—the stranger groaned and nodded gloomily—"he has contracted, the companions he has been among, the very language he has learned, and—and—and everything, it can no longer be considered reasonable that you either owe him any obedience or that he has any claim upon your affection. Besides, he has practised a most cruel and heartless deception upon you." The returned Fortune-hunter shook his head in the deepest self-reproach. "The most he can ask of you will be your forgiveness. As for staying on here, that, of course, is out of the question——"

"Quite," said Johnny. "Oh, quite! I know it."

"He has been among rough and common people so long that he would feel unhappy in a respectable English house."

"That is so," said Johnny.

"He has got, he tells me, a very comfortable clearing out in the Western States somewhere, with a house upon it, and—and, I suppose, what is wanted to live comfortably."

"Don't forget there's a whiskey-bottle," said Johnny, not boastfully, but as one

who wishes to make a completely clean breast.

"You see," George went on, that one fact illustrating the manner and customs of the man, without need of further revelations, "he has a whiskey-bottle."

"When you've got that," said Johnny, "you don't want anything else," again, not boastfully or ostentatiously, but meaning to deliver himself of his own sentiments, and show himself to his daughter, in one full confession, the man he really was.

"Oh, good gracious!" said Copernica; "nothing else!"

"So that," George continued, "he has agreed and promised me, in point of fact, to go away at once—this very day—and get back to his cabin and his clearing in Oregon, as fast as he can. I do not think he can get away much farther from us than Oregon, which is on the other side of the Rocky Mountains. And when he is really back again in his own clearing, we shall be very glad to hear from him—occasionally."

But Milly's heart softened.

"If you are really my father," she said, holding out both her hands, "who used to write me such loving letters, you should have something more to say to me, now, but farewell?"

He took her hand, and then timidly bent and kissed her forehead.

"My pretty," he murmured, "I'm not fit to be your father. I doubt whether you ought to ha' let me kiss you. I'm only what your husband says I am. But I meant well. I did indeed. And they were a great comfort to me—them letters."

He said no more, but his eyes—those foolish, helpless, and wandering eyes—filled with tears and ran over. This natural emotion was sufficient excuse to his daughter for his shambling speech and ungrammatical expressions. When had the other man shown the least emotion?

"Milly," said Copernica in her quick way, "I suppose you'll come home with me if it is only to break the news and help unpack the maps again. How my poor father will ever get over it, I don't know. Mother will be pleased, I think. She never greatly took to the plan, and I think she'll be pleased to stay. But there, mother, you see, doesn't much believe in my father's wonderful discoveries. As for the boys, they must just stay where they are—poor fellows! Well, I should be sorry to think that poor Tycho was going out to roll molasses tubs, and Kepler to load up a steamboat with wood. As to the people," she

added vindictively, turning her glasses full on the people referred to, "who go abroad and come home again without the common decency of being rich"—the returned pauper blushed—"all I can say is that they're quite as bad as other people who come home and pretend to have colleges, and not half so pleasant, while they last. What," she snapped at him so fiercely that he jumped, "what did you go away at all for, then?"

CHAPTER IX. HIS CHRISTIAN-NAME.

THE map-room of Veritas Villa was stripped of everything. The maps and charts were rolled up, the sections showing the Polar Sea and the confines of the great Outer Rim, the drawings, drawn from the Scriptural accounts, the pictures made up from travellers' accounts, the books, all of which were astronomical, were taken down and packed in black boxes, locked up, fastened with rope, the Professor's name on them in white—Professor Ambler, Passenger for Colorado, viâ New York. Only the notes for the inaugural lecture remained, because the Discoverer intended to touch up, beautify, and make perfect the inaugural lecture during the journey. The notes were therefore neatly stitched together and placed in a little portfolio made on purpose for them by Copernica, out of millboard and white silk, the title being in crimson and gold, and the sun, moon, and stars, which floated on the cover, being in blue. It was beautiful and soul-inspiring even to look at that white silk portfolio, and to feel what an Evangel of Astronomical Truth it contained, and how fortunate were the Americans of Colorado State in getting such a Discoverer to reveal such a discovery. He sat—the Philosopher—among the boxes. He should have been triumphant, because he was going to get what he had prayed for all his life; but there was a cloud upon his brow; he was anxious. George's warning words weighed upon him still.

His wife sat with him. To her this breaking up of the old home, where her children had been born, where they had all been so happy, so anxious, so full of love, fear, hope, joy, sorrow—all the things which go to make life a thing always felt, if not always enjoyed, made her profoundly dejected. To be sure she could not believe that they were really going.

"Reginald," she said presently, and after a long silence, "is it real? Are we to have an income of a thousand a year?"

"You doubt still, my dear. To be sure, you have doubted always."

"Not your cleverness, Reginald; but I could not understand how you alone could be right, and all the wise men wrong. Forgive me, husband."

"It matters nothing," he replied grandly; "the faith of the whole world will strengthen your faith too."

"But, George, my dear—what did George mean?"

"I don't know what he meant. What he said was silly. Why, he tried to make out that I should do better by staying here. Staying here, where I have had to undergo every kind of contempt! What does George think about that? It seems to him a light thing for a man to be held up as a laughing-stock. They have called me a madman, they won't answer my letters, they quote me as one of the enthusiasts who ought to be locked up, they whisper if I get into a train; and if I go to church——"

"You never do, dear."

"No; because when I do I hear them whispering as I walk up the aisle: 'There is the madman, or the fool, or the ass, who teaches that the earth is flat.' Do you think that is pleasant for me to hear? And then the Society does not increase. Bagshott is very good, he talks about Truth prevailing; but Truth doesn't make a start. The office-boy says that no one has called for six months, and there have been no letters for three. The office might as well be shut. Bagshott says he will remain at home and circulate the journal, which I shall be able to fill once I get a hearing. Why, out there, oh, wife, I shall have a hearing at last!"

He sprang from his chair and walked about, swinging his arms and sending his coat-tails flying—a sure sign of the deepest emotion.

His wife threw her arms round his neck.

"My dear," she said, "it is sad to me that our home should be broken up. But what matters anything if only you get the recognition which is your due?"

"Ah," he continued, "we shall begin a new life with an honourable position, an official and recognised position which must command—I say, my dear, command; hitherto we have begged—the attention even of old-fashioned astronomers. Oh, wife, do you not think I have felt the ignominy of my life which I thought was going to be so glorious? Fifty years old next birthday and nearly thirty given to

the Great Discovery, and Error still taught in every school, though I have never ceased to lift up my voice. Here, what hope have I? But there!—oh, there! with young and generous hearts, unprejudiced, open to reason, what future awaits me there!"

He stopped, clapped his hand to his eyes as one who is dazzled by the prospect, and sat down. His wife listened and sighed. She had never before, perhaps, so fully realised her husband's position and enthusiasm; she sighed because the thought would intrude itself that something safe in the City would have been worth all the glory that science can confer. This is the way with mothers who have a large family and a small income; they would at any moment actually sacrifice all the immortality about to be conferred by a grateful posterity on their husbands in return for a solid income; they think that there is nothing in the world like domestic ease, comfort, and a good house allowance; nothing like bringing up the boys and girls well, and giving them a good start in life. If that great man, their father, cannot do that, why, a thousand pities that glory and an income do not go together! Perhaps the reason why the children of great men do not often become themselves great is that the family income would not allow of the first elements of greatness being properly taught.

"The boys like the prospect," said their mother dubiously. "We could not go without them, but Tycho is getting on so well; and we have such good reports about Kepler."

"They will get on better, under Mr. Montoro's patronage. Everybody gets on in America; the Americans welcome Englishmen; they give them their best things; they smooth the way for them to get on. Mr. Montoro says so, and he ought to know. Look at his example. My dear, I have always been a republican, I believe. It will be a congenial atmosphere." He threw out his arms as if to breathe the stimulating and bracing air of a Republic. "It is only under such a government that Prejudice vanishes and Truth can win her way. You will see very clearly that in astronomy the great heart of the American people will soon beat true and sound."

Just then Copernica appeared. She was returned from the wedding. Her cheeks were flushed, her eyes red, and the traces of tears lay upon her spectacles. She stole in like a guilty criminal, and sank

upon one of the boxes in a fine unstudied attitude of despair.

"Papa," she said, "we may begin to unpack our boxes at once." She jumped up and began to untie the cords with feverish haste. "Let us put back the maps and books, and go on as we used to. There will be no going to America."

"Copernica, are you mad?"

The Discoverer turned pale and trembled.

"I am not mad," she replied. "In a little while you will hear all. It is enough to make one mad, but I am in my senses."

At this moment the Benefactor himself appeared with a white rosebud in his button-hole, a white waistcoat, and brand-new hat and lavender gloves. No one could look richer than Mr. Montoro. Perhaps he overdid the part. Very rich men, if I may generalise from a limited field of observation, generally wear shabby hats and are careless about their gloves. But at Veritas Villa they were not close observers. At sight of him, so glossy, so well groomed, so prosperous and sleek, so confident and so brave, the Philosopher recovered heart.

But his wife caught Copernica by the hand, and watched, her suspicions fully aroused.

"I shall not keep you long, Professor," he said, smiling. "All goes well with the preparations? The day after to-morrow, Milly and I shall be on salt water. Your cousin is coming here at twelve to complete the sale of my little property. He told you?"

"Yes, yes," the Professor wiped his brow—all would be well, surely. "Yes, Dick said I was to be in the way. To be sure, I am always at home."

"It is a bore," said Mr. Montoro, "that one cannot take a house and sell it as one sells a horse. The affair has been dragging for three weeks, and every week means loss when one's concerns are so vast as mine. Money, my friend, even the richest of us cannot afford to lose, and yet I believe I have lost more by the delay than if I had given the houses away. Milly will come with me, after we have finished, to complete her outfit in Regent Street."

"Why," said the Professor, "this little girl of mine came running in five minutes ago, crying that we should not go to America at all."

"Nor more we sha'n't," said Copernica doggedly and idiomatically.

Mr. Montoro's eyes flashed.

"What does the girl mean?" he asked.

"We shall not go to America," she repeated.

Mr. Montoro hesitated. What did she mean? It puzzled him. At this moment he had not the slightest fear or suspicion of danger, yet the girl's words troubled him. What did she mean? In his pocket was the cheque for the whole of his victim's fortune. In a few moments he was to receive the produce of the sale of his houses which were not his to sell. In another day he was to start for America, taking with him the girl whom he proposed to employ as a confederate and a decoy.

The moralist may pause to remark that the whole of this villainous scheme had grown up bit by bit from the robbery of the notes and the letters. Thus does one ill weed produce another, till the whole garden is overrun.

"Of course you will please yourselves about coming out. But I thought you had accepted my offer, Mr. Ambler."

The coldness of his tone frightened the Astronomer.

"Of course I have accepted," he hastened to make submission; "of course I have accepted. Why, the child is mad! I do not know what has possessed her this morning. Don't be offended, Mr. Montoro."

"And yet we shall not go," repeated this amazing girl.

Just then, at the stroke of twelve, Mr. Richard Ambler arrived, bearing his bundle of papers. With him were Milly and George.

It was remarked by Mrs. Ambler that Milly bestowed no greeting upon her father. She, too, exhibited outward and visible signs that something had happened. Her father, however, seemed to observe nothing.

"Now," he said, "let us finish the business."

"Your business," replied the solicitor, "shall be settled in a very few moments."

He stood at the table, the papers in his hand, at the right of the Discoverer, who sat in his wooden chair, looking on with troubled eyes, because things were going on which he understood not. On his left stood Mr. Montoro. Behind the solicitor was Milly, George standing beside her, and in the window Copernica and her mother. Then there was a hush while Mr. Richard read over his papers.

"I must trouble you, Mr.—ah!—Mr. Montoro," he said, "with a little business first. I have received your rents for a

good many years. I have here a complete statement, with vouchers of the receipts and disbursements for years."

"I don't want to see it," Mr. Montoro replied. "I really have not the time to look into these trifles."

"A hundred and eighty pounds a year, or thereabouts," said Mr. Richard, "is not a trifle. But if you will not examine the account, you will not perhaps object to give me a discharge in full of all claims. My cousin, as you know, has received the whole income, after paying ground-rents, repairs, and my own charges, for the maintenance and education of Miss Montoro."

"Let us sign this discharge and get on," said his client.

He took the paper offered him and wrote his name at the end of the form—"Charles Montoro."

"Thank you," said Mr. Richard. "Only, pardon me, in legal documents it is necessary to sign the name in full. Is this your only Christian-name?"

The effect of these words was wonderful. For suddenly the man remembered the rambling talk of Johnny in his cabin about his ridiculous Christian-name. He had forgotten to find out what it was. He changed colour and glanced round him like a wild creature at bay. In the grave face of the solicitor, the angry looks of George Ambrose, and the cold eyes of Milly he saw that the game, somehow, was up.

"We will have both your Christian-names, Mr.—ah!—Mr. Montoro."

"Both my names?" He seized the pen again. "Give me the paper back. I am to sign here, am I—and in full? Very good. Milly, my dear, were you ever told your father's ridiculous Christian-name?" Milly made no reply. "Do you know it, Mr. Ambler? I think I would bet you five dollars that you do not know it."

"I do know it," said Mr. Richard. "The point is, that you do not."

Mr. Montoro threw down the pen and tore the paper across, with a remark about the Christian-name which is generally expressed by a long black line.

"Tell me, if you please, what this means?"

"It means many things. But, first of all, is it not an unusual thing for a man to forget his Christian-name? You may learn yours by looking at the register in Hackney Church, where you were christened and married. You are welcome to that infor-

mation. Did you ever know a case in which a man forgot his Christian-name?"

"This is a most extraordinary proceeding," said Mr. Montoro, recovering his coolness. "Is there anything more to follow? Milly, are you——" She turned her head and made no sign of hearing. "Is this a conspiracy, in which my own daughter is concerned? Are you in it, too, you drivelling old idiot?" He looked so fierce as he addressed the Discoverer, who jumped in his chair, and was seized with a mighty terror.

"We are all in it, except Mr. Ambler," said George.

"In that case," Mr. Montoro replied with dignity, "there is nothing for it but to set the law at work. You, sir," he addressed Mr. Richard, "will have to give an account of your management; part of the plot, I suppose, was to say nothing about it. Your share," he addressed George, "was the house property. Yours," he addressed Milly, "was to aid and abet your lover. An ungrateful and unnatural daughter!"

"Go on," said George; "my turn will come directly."

"I have nothing more to say," Mr. Montoro replied, taking his hat. "So far as I am concerned this is the last time I shall speak with anybody in this room. The law shall take its course."

"By all means," said Mr. Richard. "First, however, George, you wished to tell the man what we know about him."

"I will tell Reginald in his presence," said George. He took up his position at the door, as if to bar escape. "This man, Reginald, is not Charles Montoro at all—he is an impostor and a pretender—his real name is Percival Brooke West; he was once a gentleman, and in the army, but sold out many years ago, after the Crimean War; he then lived about town, gambling and throwing away his money. Fifteen years ago he got into a mess, and did something—I know not what—something disgraceful. Then he was obliged to fly, and was expelled his club. He went to America, and has lived on his wits, that is to say by cheating and gambling in various forms. He met Milly's father in Oregon, robbed him of his money and his daughter's letters, and came to London. He now lives at the Langham Hotel under his own name. No, sir, you stay until I have finished. If you try to get out before we let you go, you will have to fight me."

The Claimant folded his arms, and tried to

look unconcerned, but he failed, because he was totally unprepared for this. How on earth had they found it out? As regards the Christian-name, that was an accident caused by his own carelessness; he ought to have foreseen this danger; it was a most foolish thing to forget. But the array of facts—how had they got hold of them? And he remembered, too late, what he had at the very outset proposed to himself, namely, to rush the thing through, and be off before any questions could arise. Better, far better, had he not been tempted by this dream of gambling in its higher branches, with a beautiful woman to help him. Better had he been contented with the plunder of Milly's houses, and made no attempt upon the poor astronomer. But he had his cheque in his pocket that moment. When he got away he would drive straight to the bank: perhaps it would not be too late.

"You see," George concluded, "you are known."

"I see," he replied, "that you have conspired together to make up a story. Now, if you please, we will conclude this scene. But do not imagine that I am going to let you have my property."

"One moment. We shall not keep you much longer." George opened the door, and admitted the lawful owner of the name of Montoro. "You know this man, perhaps."

"Oh," said the Colonel, "you have got hold of Johnny, have you! That explains it. So you made your way home, Johnny, did you? Now I understand it all, and I suppose the game is up."

"Colonel," said Johnny, with a show of courage, "give me back my money and my letters."

"As for the letters," the colonel took out his pocket-book; "here they are; I have no longer any use for them. As for the money, it was no more yours than mine. You have now got your cabin and your clearing. Be content with it, unless you prefer to stay at home with the most dutiful daughter in the world, and the most delightful son-in-law. They will be as charmed with your personal habits as you will be with the young man's manners. You were made for each other."

He tossed the letters across the table. Johnny seized them, and crammed them into his pockets.

"Can you tell me your Christian-name before we break up this meeting?"

"They baptised me Worshipful Charles,"

said Johnny. "Colonel, don't keep all the money."

"Worshipful Charles!" the Colonel repeated. "Now, Mr. Richard Ambler, could any one guess such a fool of a name as that? Worshipful Charles! It's enough to turn any man into such a Johnny as this poor creature. Milly, you will learn to love your new father more and more the longer you know him. He is as brave as he is truthful; he is as warlike as he is clear-sighted; he is as temperate as he is resolute; he hates whiskey as he hates the sin of falsehood; and he is as rich as I am myself. As for the houses——"

"Matilda's houses," said Johnny; "they're the little maid's now, not mine at all. Colonel, don't be hard on a man. I'm a peaceful man, but don't keep all them notes."

"Peaceful! Good Lord!" cried George. "Is there a single kick in the whole man? He robs you of your money, he tries to rob you of your daughter, he has almost robbed her of her little fortune, and you call yourself a peaceful man."

"It pays best," Johnny replied. "I've got through life comfortably through being peaceful, with lots of fighting men, stickers and shooters, around all the time. Colonel, say you won't keep it all."

"Good Heavens!" cried George again, "why, you ought to give him in charge. You should follow him to his hotel, and go with him wherever he goes until he gives you back the money."

"That is what you would do, my fine fellow," said the Colonel. "I wish I had you out in the West, I would make you dance, my cocky little clerk with the bantam crow."

"And I, Mr. Brooke West, would make you hang."

"Hush! You don't know," said Johnny. "Oh, you don't guess what it is to fight a man like the Colonel. No, no, speak him fair. You will find him very good company, too," he added without much fitness as far as anyone could tell. But doubtless in his mind there was some sort of connection.

"There are difficulties, Mr. Ambrose," the Colonel went on. He was quite easy and comfortable in his manner now, having made up his mind that it was quite useless to carry on the game any longer. "There are difficulties which you do not understand. Our gallant and daring friend Johnny, or Worshipful Charles, claims some money

He must first prove that he lost that money; next, that I took that money; and thirdly, that it was his money."

"I found it," said Johnny.

"A very likely story. Now, is there anything more you wish to say, Mr. Ambrose, or any of you?"

At this point the Great Discoverer, who had been listening in an abject state of confusion, bewilderment, and terror, began to realise something of the situation.

"George," he pointed to the new comer, "who, after all, is this gentleman?"

"This is Milly's father, Reginald. Do you not understand?"

"The place in his college has been offered to me. He knows that, I suppose?"

"Oh, papa," cried Copernica, "there is no college—there is no Fortune. This poor man is a beggar and a pauper; all that was said about the Fortune was false, wasn't it, you Mr. Montoro?"

He shook his head.

"All lies," he replied.

"Oh!" the Discoverer sprang from his chair and literally hurled himself upon the Colonel. He was not a fighting man, but his whole thought was not to let him go; therefore, he threw his arms round his neck and hung on. "Hold him—keep him from running away!" he screamed. "He has got a cheque for all my money—all my money—in his pocket—all my money!" he really shrieked in his agony, thinking that he had made his wife and children penniless.

"Let him go, Reginald," said his cousin; "let him go. Your money is safe." They dragged him, crying out for his money, from his enemy. "Your money is quite safe. You see, cousin, I naturally thought when you sent me instructions to sell out, that you were up to some foolishness, so I took the liberty of delaying the business. Your stock, my poor cousin, still stands to your name, and your cheque is worthless."

"Richard," said Mrs. Ambler, who had been looking on with an earnest desire for all to go away, so that she could begin to make things as they used to be—"Richard, I shall be grateful to you for my whole life."

"In that case," said the Colonel, adjusting his rosebud, which had been slightly bruised in the struggle, "in that case, let us tear it up." He took the cheque out of his pocket-book and did so. "And now, I am afraid there remains nothing but to unpack your boxes and put up your man again. But you have my free

permission to quote my case as that of a Recruit won over by force of reason and argument. If I can flatten the earth a little more for you in any part of it, I shall willingly do so. Nothing more, I think?"

"Richard," said Mrs. Ambler, "please make Reginald's money so that he can never touch any of it again."

"Except a criminal prosecution for conspiring to obtain money under false pretences," said Mr. Richard.

"Yes, that I fully expect. This witness," he pointed to Johnny, "will be invaluable to you, will he not? Good-bye, Milly; I wish you, for your husband's sake, your mother's temper—good-bye."

"Good Heavens!" said Mrs. Ambler, "we were within a day of being beggars. Oh, Copermica!"

He put on his hat and was about to go, when the door opened and a lady of middle-age, very stout, and extremely dignified in her bearing, dressed in gorgeous silks, appeared.

"Where," she said, looking round the room, "is my brother-in-law, Charles Montoro?"

"Your brother-in-law, madam?" asked the Colonel. "Is Worshipful Charles your brother-in-law? Do you mean the rich, the successful—the enormously rich and successful Worshipful Charles Montoro?"

"Certainly I do. Milly, my dear, is this gentleman your father? He does not look——"

"Behold him! Come, Johnny." The Colonel seized the man of peace, who had shown, at sight of the new comer, a desire to hide himself behind Mr. Richard, and dragged him forward. "Your sister-in-law—perhaps Matilda's sister, who married into carriage company."

"Oh, Lord! It is P'leena," said Johnny, looking horribly guilty.

"My dear Aunt Paulina," Milly stepped forward, "there has been a very great mistake. My father has not made the great Fortune we all thought he had. He has failed and is very poor, in fact he is going back to America, where he has a small farm. All our plans are changed, and I was married this morning to George Ambrose."

"No Fortune? No money made? You a pauper, Charles?" the lady grew very red. "Explain this deception, pray. Milly, I demand an explanation."

"It is P'leena!" Johnny repeated.

"There is none to make, aunt, except what I have told you—my father is not rich."

"I have driven all the way from Wimbledon to be confronted with a Pauper!" said this amiable lady, "after what I have been given to understand. And you, Milly, have actually married without consulting me, your only respectable relation! Pray, what is your husband?"

"I am a clerk," said George unblushingly.

"Henceforth, Milly," said the outraged lady, "go your own way. You have no more ambition than your father. A Pauper!" She withered the luckless Johnny. "It is enough to make my poor deceived, unfortunate sister Matilda turn in the grave into which you have worried her. After all that has been done for you, Milly, you marry a clerk!"

She walked out, and the next moment they heard the wheels of her carriage driving her away.

"This is very amusing," said the Colonel. "I congratulate you, Johnny, on your reception by your friends. Nothing like the domestic affections, is there? Now I am going. My cab is outside. Would you like a lift to town, Johnny, just to talk about those notes? We shall agree very well together, once we get away from mischievous pettifoggers and greedy clerks."

Johnny followed unresisting. He could not resist the Colonel. He did not even say good-bye to his daughter, but went without a word.

Milly expected her father to return that day, and the next, and the day after. Then George went to the Langham and enquired. Mr. Brooke West was gone, and nothing was known of any Mr. Montoro. What happened was very simple. The Colonel drove his friend Johnny to Wapping, or the neighbourhood. There he gave him dinner, with copious whiskey. He then found out a steamer going to sail to New York the next day. He persuaded Johnny, without the least difficulty, that his only chance was to get back to Oregon with all speed, lest somebody should take possession of his clearing, and that ten pounds, as an advance, would quite cover any claims he might have on account of that bundle of notes. He nursed Johnny all that day, keeping him happy with whiskey and amused with continual talk. In the morning he took him on board, and did not leave him until the last bell rang and the last visitor had to descend the companion. In fact, he was

the last, and as he went down, Johnny was feebly hanging over the bulwarks, waving his hat in a friendly farewell. Never was such a Johnny known.

I believe that he is now sitting by himself in the shade beside his cabin, listening contentedly to the murmur of the stream, and regarding through the door with sentimental admiration a distant view of the whiskey-bottle on the table.

As for the Astronomer, it took him many days to recover even the semblance of dignity and self-respect. He was crushed; he did not dare to face the boys, who were reduced to mere rags of despair and wrath. Copernica took her father to the seaside at Walton-on-Naze, where he amused himself by considering the flatness of the ocean, and so gradually pulled round. He has now entirely recovered, because he has made converts of two ladies—sisters—with money. They are convinced that he is not only right and a very great Discoverer indeed, but also that he is mentioned in Prophecy, and will be connected with the end of the world. They talk of leaving him all their money for the purpose of disseminating the truth. He has begun a new chapter on the Flatness of the Earth, and has promised a Speculation on the Outer Rim. Sometimes, however, the healed wound breaks out afresh, and he remembers with shame and sorrow how he was cajoled and deceived, and how he was ready to part with the whole of his fortune to an unscrupulous adventurer and cheat.

I ought to leave the Colonel to his own devices. In novels he would have gone back to America, there to lose all his ill-gotten money on euchre and a black bottle; after this he would have become once more adventurer, sportsman, and card-sharper; and he would have been finally hanged for horse-stealing, or shot for cheating at monty. I beg to explain that Mr. Percival Brooke West did nothing of the kind.

Johnny dispatched, he sat down to think.

First of all he had not done so badly since he had managed to get into his little gambling circle. The stolen eight hundred pounds had increased to more than a thousand, without deducting his personal expenses. And he felt that he could not possibly return to the old life. And then

he remembered that he had a mother and sisters.

They lived by the seaside in a pretty cottage—a widow woman and two elderly daughters. They are quite well-to-do people, and until the autumn of this year of grace, eighteen hundred and eighty-three, they lamented continually the absence of the son and brother who had turned out so badly, and been so “extravagant”—that is how they put it; but though they knew nothing for certain, they were aware that there had been more than extravagance.

One morning in September the prodigal came home.

“Mother,” he said, “let us have no talk of the past. I have had time to sow my wild oats. I have saved, at the expense of many privations and great resolution, a small sum of money to come home with. Let me stay a little while with you and my sisters before I go back to the struggle.” He had grown his grey beard again, looked quite gentle and humble, and spoke so kindly that their hearts were melted.

Let him stay? Will they ever let him go? And if a tiger be well fed, regularly fed, and kept warm, and given all that he wants, that tiger, in course of time, will become, if you please, a mere tame cat. He will undergo this transformation without any repentance, tears, remorse, sorrow, self-reproach, penitence, or lamentations of a sinner, but comfortably, gradually, and smoothly. In course of time, Mr. Percival Brooke West will, I dare say, inherit his mother’s property. He will not return to town, where his late reception inspired him with a dislike for Clubland, but will remain in the country, and will become an authority on whist; he will be popular among many as he grows older, on account of his strange experiences and his varied stories of travel and adventure; and though in course of time there may come into the country rumours of wild youth and excesses, followed by trouble, no one will believe that he was ever anything but an honourable gentleman, with as fair a record as falls to the lot of most, though perhaps he lost his money, and had to go abroad for a time to make more.

But Milly and her husband abide by the banks of the gentle river Lea, and are contented, and he hopes to do such great things in the future as will lead him to the gate of honour and the way of wealth.

END OF “A GLORIOUS FORTUNE.”

WHY THEY KEPT HOLYDAY.

BY SUSAN K. PHILLIPS.

HARK, how the bells are clashing overhead !
 They never rang so joyously afore ;
 And every bark has got her colours spread,
 And every coble's dancing to the shore ;
 For all the birds are telling of the shoal
 Laid rank and ready out by Huntcliff height,
 I know the fisher-lads, and not a soul
 Will tak' his lines over the bar to-night.

Look yonder—you can see them over there,
 With all the barefoot childer gathered round ;
 I reckon that they make a likely pair,
 The dead that has come back, the lost that's
 found ;
 To think the hands that meet so frank and free,
 Last parted just as murder touched on strife !
 Come and I'll tell thee—sit aside of me—
 Why we keep holyday in Hagalythe.

Them two, twelve years back, wer' two reckless boys,
 With twenty summers dancing in their blood,
 Playing with life and time, like bairns with toys,
 And hot as fire with each changing mood.
 Sin' Eve first touched the apple in the Book,
 A woman's in all mischieves that I know,
 And 'twas a lass's idle word and look
 That brought them two to harm—it's always so.

She wer' a bonnie maid too ! her blue eyes,
 First on the one and then the other lit,
 As bright and changeeful as the April skies,
 Nor ever meant a wrong or shame in it ;
 But old men watched the lads go glowering past,
 And heard the muttered threat and sullen oath,
 And said, 'twere pity if the fit should last,
 Summat would come on it, to one or both.

It wer' a wild March morning ; I had been
 Looking for wreckage out by Kindlin Bay,
 And up by Saltwick, where the wind blew keen,
 I, with my load, wer' toiling on my way ;
 Bursting across the hauf I met our Jack,
 All white and scared he wer', and hunted like ;
 And, as I hailed him, started sudden back,
 And raised an angry hand, as if to strike.

"What ails thee, lad?" I said, and down he dropped,
 And hid his face among the clustered heather ;
 I cannot tell thee now how long we stopped,
 Nor all we said, out in the fierce March weather.
 I loved the lad, aye, and he knew it well ;
 And so at last, I heard the heavy tale,
 And I was sore to hark, as he to tell,
 And ever round us roared the rising gale.

'Twas all about a silly scarlet knot
 Polly had gi'en to one of 'em, you see ;
 I lay the lass hersel' had clean forgot,
 Before they all had parted company,
 Up there at Runswick feast ; but so it was.
 And they two came to words about the thing,
 Up by the High Lights, where the short slape
 grass
 Beneath the flying foam was glistening.

Poor Jack ! he sobbed out that he scarceelins knew
 Who struck the first blow, but they grappled
 then,
 And close and closer to the edge they drew
 Of the steep cliff, the furious struggling men ;
 And then a shout, a slip, a desperate clutch,
 At the witch-elm that 'mid the boulders sprung ;
 A single fragile stem it wer', not such
 As fit to bear what to its branches clung.

It swayed and bent ; three hundred feet beneath
 The angry breakers crashed upon the shore ;
 It swayed and strained ; a swift and headlong
 death
 Was waiting for them in the hungry roar ;

It swayed and parted with the double weight,
 'And Will—I had to stoop to hear Jack tell—
 Just smiled and said, "Be good to Polly, mate,
 Good-bye," and loosed his hold, and fell, and fell.

The lightened boughs swung upwards ; blind and
 dazed,
 Jack struggled back to land. He looked, he said,
 Once down, just once, and then, like some thing
 crazed,
 Over the bare blank down he turned and fled ;
 Then, as if stung anew, he broke my hold.
 "Tell her I'm gone—gone like another Cain,
 And she may curse-me when thy tale is told,"
 And dashed away into the wind and rain.

I brought my heavy tidings to the town,
 With looks that spoke of doom before my speech,
 And many a day they searched the dreary down,
 And many a day they roamed along the beach ;
 And by the hearth our Polly wept her fill,
 While gossips mourned, or sought their bits of
 black ;
 But the wild sea had no account of Will,
 And the wild moor gave us no word of Jack.

But time went by ; fast fills each vacant place.
 I reckon life's too short to cherish sorrow ;
 And folk that sink to rest with woe-struck face,
 Rise up and go to work in peace to-morrow ;
 And ere another March came roaring in,
 Polly was wedded to an inland chap ;
 They said she wer' in luck such bien to win,
 I'stead of a rough fisher's hut—mayhap !

But I, who loved the lads, for many a year,
 I'd come and stand beside that ragged stem,
 And while the blast swept o'er the moorland drear,
 Stare out across the sea, and think on them ;
 And ofens as I stood and thought, I'd pray
 That the poor boy I saw that bitter night,
 As quiet in some stranger churchgarth lay,
 As t'other, where the great waves crashed to
 white.

It was but yester-eve that down our street,
 Two tall bronzed chaps came with a steady
 stride,
 With a broad smile for all they chanced to meet ;
 We stood and stared—sudden a woman cried,
 A wild shrill cry—and, staggering up to Will,
 Clings round his neck as fit the man to smother ;
 And Jack puts back the crowd, and, grave and still,
 He says, "There's none to ken me, I've no
 mother."

Thou'lt hear them tell their tale theirsens. A boat
 Picked Will up, drifting, dead-like, with the
 tide ;
 'Twas war-time then—once on high seas afloat
 A likely lad was sure enough to bide !
 "I've glad they pressed me now," he says, and
 shakes
 A heavy purse ; he's boatswain of the Hawk,
 And how she swoops upon each prize she makes
 He'll tell you, when you get him free i' talk.

Jack met the soldiers, as in his despair
 He hung upon the bridge at Castleton,
 And reckless what he did, he 'listed there.
 Lord ! where the lad has been, and what he's
 done ;
 He is a sergeant now, and loves his trade,
 And wears his stripes—I scarce know what they
 are !
 But, an' he goes a-wooing, not a maid
 Among us, 'ull say "Nay" to the Hussar.

You should ha' seen how Polly laughed and cried,
 Over her butter, up there at the Cross,
 When them two went to greet her, side by side,
 Happy and fortunate spite love and loss ;
 She'll bring her master up the town to-night ;
 For we may well make feast—not oft i' life
 The dead come back, the lost stand full i' sight,
 As our two lads to-day in Hagalythe !

MISS JONES.

By MADGE HEPWORTH DIXON.

CHAPTER I.

THERE are incidents in one's life which seem oddly bitten into one's memory. Often enough a stray sentence in childhood, or the physiognomy of some chance acquaintance in an out-of-the-way corner of the world, take hold of one's recollection with a vitality out of all relation to their intrinsic importance. The incongruity of these haphazard memories often strikes one as flagrant; but their very lack of proportion serves to rivet the attention like a bit of bad draughtsmanship in a tenderly-conceived picture. It is as if some impressions, for no very evident cause, were drawn in a biting acid on the retina of that strange bundle of incongruities called a mind, while others are merely sketched in pencil and easily blurred and effaced.

There must have been something of the former process in connection with an incident which happened some six or seven years ago at Bordighera. I am, I may safely say, the least sentimental of mortals, and laugh when all right-minded persons are supposed to be what is called "touched"; but I still experience an odd sensation when I see a solitary steamer diminishing on a broad expanse of sea.

I found myself in Mentone the other day, and ran over to Bordighera for a couple of hours. Sauntering along the terrace to the left of the long flight of steps which leads from the quaint and tortuous streets of the old town, I again saw the half forgotten scene of years before. There was a time when I almost knew the stones. Up above in the narrow turnings of the old town the burning sun can only penetrate at noon-day; but here, overlooking the spreading palm-gardens and the exquisite sapphire sea, the world is glad with the radiant golden sunshine. The long, straight, dusty road to Ventimiglia lies from this height like a silver thread upon the delicate green of the olive growth, and, facing towards San Remo, the tiny white villages nestle on the mountains like sea-gulls on a rock. But I hardly saw these things. I was carried back in recollection six or seven years to a somewhat dreary little episode in which there figured a young English girl. I never remember hearing her Christian-name; her surname was Jones.

pension below. It was one teeming afternoon in December in the year 187—.

There was an air of rigid if mildewed respectability about the Villa Clementine. It had a look of gathering up its skirts and retiring behind a couple of shabby laurestinus-trees to shut out the cruel proximity of the rectangular telegraph-wires topping the railway, to say nothing of the sideway view across the bridge of a dilapidated restaurant and a newly-opened shop, labelled "Marbres," where head-stones were carved for the glorification of those unlucky enough to require such commodities. The Villa Clementine (Pension) as was touchingly bracketed on the board facing the road, had, like some of its inmates, seen better days. It had been built by an English family, had even, in its heyday, been tenanted by a countess in her own right, a fact not infrequently whispered in confidence by Madame Pleyel on the occasions when she visited her lady-boarders in their respective bedrooms. The villa had fallen on evil days, and seemed to resent its misfortunes in a certain gloomy aloofness which it held from its surroundings. The building had decidedly an air of not being on speaking terms with the rest of the straggling street in which it lay. The garden, trimmed by a hired gardener every few weeks, in front of the best boarder's windows, ran wild in untidy confusion at the back and side of the house, and even extended its green arms in the shape of moss and mildew along the lower portions of the once stately marble steps.

It was at the portal of this somewhat dreary establishment that a hired carriage stopped one teeming wet day in December. The rare southern rain had fallen since sunrise, so that the dusty roads of the day before were transformed into rivers of liquid mud. The villa presented the smudged and streaked appearance of a half-washed urchin as the rain trickled down its stucco surface, and the top of the portico drained its contents of water in monotonous thuds upon the steps below. It even coursed from the rim of the waterproof hat down the nose of the surly coachman, who at last, obeying the repeated cries of a somewhat shrill, though youthful voice from the interior of the cab, reined in his steaming horse at the Villa Clementine. Then a slim girl's figure, muffled about the mouth and struggling with a half-opened umbrella, descended from the cab, and, mounting the steps, which had become small water-courses

assailed the door-bell. After a few minutes the door was opened cautiously by Madame Pleyel, who, dressed in a shabby brown dress with a large fancy hair-brooch, looked out and smiled a half-timid and half-mechanical smile as she ushered the stranger in.

Mademoiselle wanted a room? Madame had a large airy room to the north, more strictly speaking to the north-west, which she could let upon advantageous terms. Mademoiselle must remember that it was the beginning of the season. Madame's rooms to the south were occupied. In a fortnight mademoiselle should have her choice—did I not know the formula?—at present there was the bedroom looking on the garden. The table was excellent, madame affirmed, and the réunions in the drawing-room every evening charming. The room was lighted with wax candles, and Madame Pleyel—for it was the mistress of the establishment who thus condescended to extol the advantages of the Villa Clementine—drew herself up to her proud height of four feet eleven inches, with the air of saying that neither art nor luxury could demand more. The small stranger faintly demurred on the ground of economy and the northern aspect, but, on finding the bedroom large, and furnished with a balcony and a view of the mountains and palm-gardens, took off her hat and sent out for her one modest trunk in token of concluding the bargain.

The face and head, thus denuded of covering, proclaimed the new comer to be an English girl of no very unordinary type. The features, which I had afterwards an opportunity of studying, were small and regular, without being of the flashy order of beauty which may be said to beg admiration. The brows were broad, the nose delicate, with deeply-cut nostrils, while the lips, when compressed in thought, were thin, the under one especially, at times assuming the mere breadth of a line. The eyes, under the straight pencilling of the eyebrows, were deep-set, but piercingly and singularly bright, while on the girl's high cheek-bones blazed what Heine, with one of his touches of profound pathos, called the red northern lights of consumption. The figure was slender and a trifle flat, and the line of shoulder, too square for absolute beauty, was thrown into greater prominence by the slight stoop and compressed chest not unusual with sufferers from pulmonary disease. The unusual whiteness of her skin, which just now gathered the green reflections from the

garden outside, and the thin, small hands with their prominent blue veins, gave a singularly fragile, almost an unearthly look, to this solitary little figure.

I happened to be passing at the time and saw her.

Madame Pleyel, a discreet lady, who rarely thought it incumbent on herself to make unnecessary enquiries concerning boarders with whom she had made a satisfactory bargain, shut the bedroom-door with a puzzled look. She indulged her feminine curiosity to the extent of wondering why so delicate a young lady travelled alone; and on paying the cabman, and ordering Jules, the one breathless and overworked garçon of the pension, to bring in the trunk, permitted herself to master the name of the owner written on the label. The name, which Madame Pleyel, despite her Gallic origin, remembered to have heard, was Jones. Miss Jones, Clapham, was printed, in what looked like a schoolboy's handwriting, on the label attached with a piece of red-tape to one of the trunk-handles. Jones! Madame remembered having a pensionnaire of the name some two years back, and made a mental note of the coincidence as a topic for future conversation.

The curiosity of the other boarders in the Pension Clementine was no less stirring. There was one of those pauses when feminine excitement actually expresses itself in silence, as Miss Jones, dressed in a plain black frock and broad white wristbands, slipped timidly into her place at the six o'clock dinner.

Two courses, one of soupe maigre and another of fresh sardines, had tardily come and clatteringly gone before Miss Jones permitted herself to raise her eyes to her dinner companions. It is possible she was in a measure prepared for some eccentricities in her fellow-boarders. Bordighera is not Clapham, and Miss Jones may have expected something of novelty in the demeanour of such Russians, Swedes, or Poles as might happen to find themselves that winter in the south. But evidently, it was not the foreigners at this foreign table who aroused her astonishment. Miss Jones had not yet learnt that her own countrymen are the most independent and therefore the most eccentric persons to be seen amid the heterogeneous crowd found wandering in search of sunshine.

Among the twenty or twenty-five persons collected round the table, the two figures which first arrested her attention were

Englishwomen. To her right, heading the table with an important air, sat a lady with a large drab-coloured face and such a wondrous superstructure of pale yellow hair, set about with gold pins, as gave the top of her head the look of being a gigantic pin-cushion. The flesh hung loose about her small, sharp, blue eyes, which assumed a piercing and querulous expression as each successive dish was offered her. She wore a profusion of showy jewellery, and a liberal proportion of lace on a dress already given over to a feminine superabundance of gimp and bugles. Her conversation consisted of grumbling, half to herself and half to the table in general, while she carried on a sort of rambling soliloquy in an authoritative voice to what seemed to be an invisible person under the table, but who was afterwards discovered to be a large over-fed Scotch terrier, tied to the leg of her chair. This extraordinary lady went by the name of Madame Toto at the Villa Clementine. She had, in fact, assumed, along with rather obtrusive coronets on her pocket-handkerchiefs, an air of being some distinguished person in exile, and, as a means of keeping up her incognito, had declined to give her name. But the instinct of nomenclature is nearly as universal as language itself; and in this instance the would-be mysterious stranger simply passed by the name of her dog.

Besides this doubtful representative of Great Britain, there was a thin wiry woman with a hard but uneasy eye, who imparted her convictions with an obstinacy terrible to the other, and conversationally weaker, sex. Miss Manns, the lady in question, was both a linguist and a traveller, and was imparting some recent experiences in Asia Minor in a deep-toned but singularly penetrating voice to a small sallow-faced French professor, who sat nearly opposite to her at table. He did not appear to thoroughly understand her, but from time to time smiled in a polite but evasive way. It was not unusual to find an empty chair on either side of this talented lady, but her conversational powers made her independent of such conventional restraints as are supposed to restrict a woman's attention to her immediate neighbours. Not a diner in the pension but was in his time brought within range of her tongue, or hail of her inflexible eye. She had, besides the gift of tongues, an extraordinary talent for organising excursions in the neighbourhood, which gave her a sort

of authority in the pensions in which she generally found herself. The rest of the boarders were less eccentric types. A couple of respectable bourgeois from a place near Toulon sat near Madame Toto. They said little, retired early, always wore mufflers and woollen shawls, and took beef-tea at the table d'hôte dinner. At the other end of the table, over against Miss Manns, sat a large complacent Parisian, who decorously proclaimed her widowhood in black bombazine, and a profusion of fanciful jet ornaments. She was less artificial than most inmates of the gay capital, but had still the practice of too frequently using a smile that had perhaps done good work in its youth. Its owner at present confined herself to eating prodigious meals, with a philosophic disregard to the clatter of dishes and babel of tongues around her, and punctually played cards with an ex-priest, who appeared every evening in the drawing-room after dinner. The sterner portion of creation were always in a minority at the Villa Clementine. Besides the small professor who suffered from dyspepsia and Miss Manns's volubility, there were only at that time at the pension a stout, florid young author of the ultra-realistic school, who was, it was rumoured, a frequent contributor to *Gil Blas*, and who talked a great deal about "*La Femme*," and a pale young German naval officer, who occupied the chair next to Miss Jones. I could not help noticing what a pretty couple they made, sitting together: she, with her smooth dark braids and transparent skin; he, with his fair northern hair and broad shoulders. They seemed, however, too shy to speak to each other, and the dinner dragged on as usual, amid the grumbling of Madame Toto, the clatter of dishes, and the distant but resonant solution of the Eastern Question from Miss Manns's quarter of the table.

CHAPTER II.

NOT a drop of rain had fallen for over five weeks. The old year had gone and the new year come, but visitors sauntered along under their blue-lined umbrellas, or crept under the shade of the gigantic olive-trees. Those accustomed to dreary northern skies can hardly realise that Christmas passes with an accompaniment of brilliant sunshine, with the roses blooming at your windows, and the fervent, cloudless blue overhead. The spirit of the

sleepy southern life soon takes possession of the idler who sits under the palm-trees and watches the sea-gulls skim along the surface of the tideless sea. There was just a line of foam fringing the sapphire tint of the little bay at my feet that morning, while the gleaming white of a cross-sailed boat, which lay gently swerving on the waters, blended with the pearly horizon. It is an enchanted land, like the realisation of a childish dream of fairyland. Are there, indeed, one begins to think, such evils as chilling fogs and gloomy skies? Do cold, and hunger, and misery really exist, or is not the whole idea like some miserable nightmare that one has, as it were, put off with the morning's light?

Once give way to the subtle seduction of this land of perpetual summer, and it is the sad pale-coloured north which alone seems unreal. Why, I ask myself, being free, have I coughed and shivered in England when in a day and a night I might have been basking in the southern sun? There is a richness here in the south in the very earth on which you tread—Nature is generous, and gives with both her hands. The warmth of a thousand summers seems to run in the veins of the dark-eyed peasants who loiter by the sea, or doze against the high wall of the luxurious palm-gardens, looking towards San Remo.

I was beginning to feel as lazy as they as I watched the little white-sailed boat weigh anchor and glide out to sea, and the sea-gulls gather and float on the face of the water off the next jut of land beyond the bay.

"What a beautiful thing is repose," I thought to myself for the hundredth time, when my ear caught the rustle of a silk dress, and the shrill snap of a terrier. There was no need to look, I knew my doom was certain and near. Madame Toto, never a disciple of the joy of calm, was upon me.

"Ah, good-morning! good-morning!" I heard the old querulous voice say, and the would-be young face approached mine as Madame Toto, to my annoyance, spread herself out and took a seat next to me on the wooden bench. Her skin looked more withered and pasty than ever in the strong morning light, in spite, or perhaps in consequence, of the black-and-white spotted veil that she wore and the wondrous superstructure of hair, tulle, and artificial roses which, as usual, crowned her head. Her arms were covered with bracelets, and her cloak with fringe. There was never about this woman a spot where the eye

could rest gratefully on a plain surface, or a simple fold. The theory that a woman's peculiar identity—I mean that special something which makes every breathing human being distinct and separate from her fellow—is often expressed in dress, was amply demonstrated in Madame Toto. There was what the new school of American novelists would call a lack of simplicity about this lady's mind. Her brain, in truth, seemed to be flounced and frilled with such a wondrous collection of whims, conceits, and preconceptions as made even the attempt at rational conversation impossible. I had, indeed, long since given up the idea, and resigned myself to her society with the patience with which we nearly always accept the inevitable.

"Did you ever see such a wretched set of people in a pension? For my part, I can't imagine where they come from," began Madame Toto.

The dog again snapped and was caressed before I answered.

"You are alluding to the Pension Clementine?" I asked stiffly, for I was even afraid of being ordinarily civil, for fear of being asked to travel back to England, or share her sitting-room in the evening.

I have no fear, personally, of her evil tongue, but dread excessively her overtures of intimacy, which she insists on proffering with the Graphic and the Illustrated London News, whenever she happens to be in a good temper.

"The idea of people taking their beef-tea in the dining-room!" she proceeded. "It positively makes me sick! Do you see those French people every day? I should say people might stay in their bedrooms. I know I shouldn't disgust people by taking beef-tea in the dining-room. Then there's Miss Manns. I'm sure she's no better than a Turk. She actually said last night that a Mussulman was cleaner and more religious than a Christian. Did you ever hear of such a thing? I call it sacrilege—nothing short of sacrilege."

Although Madame Toto paused here for a reply, I thought it what a Frenchman calls a "golden opportunity for holding my tongue." I was not in the slightest degree anxious to enlighten her ignorance as to the tenets of the Mahomedan religion, knowing her to be one of those ladies who cling to their preconceived ideas in preference to the most conclusive facts which may be demonstrated to them.

I merely, therefore, evaded the subject, and called her attention to the beauty of

the scene. I made some cursory remark about the sea being blue, or the palm-trees green—I forget which. I like, if possible, to avoid personalities, especially about people with whom one has to sit down to dinner. But Madame Toto was not a woman to be silenced when she meant to talk. She would have neither sea nor palm-trees. She never, even for conversational purposes, pretended to like scenery, and to abuse her fellow-creatures was to her one of the dearest privileges of the gift of speech.

"Now, there's that queer little thing—Miss Jones, they call her," proceeded Madame Toto. "Strange thing for a girl to be out here by herself, don't you think? I call it remarkably odd."

"The poor girl is consumptive," I said, "and her people can't all afford to leave England, I hear."

"Oh, some young governess, somebody in that class of life," continued my companion, of whose complaints and snobbishness I was beginning to get heartily tired. "Of course girls of that sort are not looked after as we, probably, have been. I was never let go three yards without my maid; but then, to be sure, I was a most attractive girl at that age. I'm sure the compliments I had paid me were quite absurd! But if that girl is an invalid, it's odd she should always be running about with young men—very odd, I should say! She is always with that German officer. They do say——"

"I really must be turning back," I could not help saying rather abruptly; there are times when one's human nature gets the better of mere politeness; and I rose and turned back down the long flight of steps to the lower new town.

The same afternoon, Miss Manns, who, as I have already mentioned, was one of those indefatigable ladies who not only go expeditions themselves, but must, perforce, carry everybody else with them, had arranged an excursion on the mountains. A few hours later, therefore, found us climbing one of those charming valleys, rich with olive woods, and shady cool places, thick with maiden-hair fern and pale violets, where the tiny streams pour down from the heights to the Mediterranean. It is pretty to hear the almost fearful silence of these mountain-passes broken with their child-like babble.

But beside the prattle of the mountain stream, there was the merry talk that day of our young couple from the pension. I was glad to have them with us, for I like to

see happy, handsome young people about. It reminds me of the time when I, now a grey-haired woman with little but my crotchets and my regrets left, first tasted what is called the folly of follies, when the eye brightens and the voice softens for someone, who may be less than a stranger, but who is at any rate more than a friend. We call it a folly, this eternal and sublime dream of youth; but not, I have generally noticed, until we are too old to evoke it. Love, as well as every other indiscretion, may be laughed at when the temptation is over; but even wiseacres, as a modern writer has acutely pointed out, regret their youth more than their imprudences, and most of us would brave temptation if we had a chance of regaining our teens.

In the present instance, I had never seen little Miss Jones look prettier; her eyes danced with pleasure as she tripped up the steep path in front of us, turning round ever and anon to encourage our more sedate footsteps. The young lieutenant, too, looked radiant in a novel way—I mean, he seemed suddenly to have gained that extra touch of animation and manliness which a young man seldom fails to exhibit when he is talking to the woman he loves. And yet, except for the gossip of the pension, to which, as a rule, I paid little attention, I had no particular reason to suppose these young people were anything to each other. The fact that he sat next to her at table, and offered her the salt and the salad, was not to me, as it appeared to the elder ladies at the Villa Clementine, convincing proof that he would also offer her what is called the devotion of a life. I am not given to the wild imaginings common to ladies who find themselves without either much occupation or amusement, and had supposed that the young German, who seemed endowed with excellent sense, and was known to be suffering from consumption, would have restricted his attentions to a purely ornamental character.

But somehow, the foolish words of Madame Toto came back, whether I would or no. Did this silly old woman speak truth in this instance, and were they likely to be more than friends? It is strange how the little speck or flaw which constitutes the tit-bit of a scandal, has the habit of lingering in the mind of the hearer, even when he has honestly and indignantly rejected it in the first instance.

As we came home the same evening, an untoward accident occurred, which gave

full force not only to my fancies, but unfortunately point and zest to what I felt to be the unjust suspicions of the morning.

CHAPTER III.

THERE is little or no twilight in the south. The tender gloaming of northern shores has no counterpart in this radiant land of burning earth and sky, where the night is upon you the moment the sun drops behind the pine-crowned heights.

We had lingered longer than usual that afternoon on the mountains, so that the darkness overtook us while we were still making our way down one of the precipitous and stony tracks which, rough as water-courses, and intricate and narrow as a maze, are to be found in many parts of the Maritime Alps.

It is in the nature of things that a young couple should drop behind in returning home, so that I hardly noticed the absence of Miss Jones and our young officer, until the sudden night made us not really lose our way, but hesitate in the choice of a path. We had arrived at a fork in the road, and Miss Manns immediately employed her excellent lungs in shouting for advice from the loiterers. But no sort of reply came in return. Shout as we would, there came only the echo of our own voices from the woods, and as my companion overruled my suggestion of returning to look for the missing ones, and the darkness gathered, we were glad to make our way home.

The path we had chosen turned out to be the right one, so that we were in plenty of time to change our things before the six o'clock dinner. We were, however, surprised to learn that our young friends had not arrived, the idea having occurred to both of us that they had simply taken another and probably shorter way back to the town.

Our suspicions increased as the evening advanced without their being heard of.

What could have become of them? Many speculations were hazarded at the dinner-table, but the conviction the most popular among the lady-boarders was undeniably that Miss Jones had sprained her ankle or had a fit on the top of a mountain, and was waiting for a litter to carry her back.

This dramatic aspect of things seemed to tickle the prevailing flutter of curiosity and mystification, and add that zest and flavour to the conversation which any accident, however painful, gives to ladies of what is called "a certain age."

It is curious that when Miss Jones, tired and footsore, but otherwise in bodily health, appeared on the scene as we were about to leave the drawing-room two hours afterwards, a reaction set in.

She had not been hurt, after all. It was strange that a young lady who had neither sprained her foot or had a fit, as had been arranged, should stay out in the dark with a young man. Lost their way? Oh yes. Those who had invented and clung to the fit and ankle theory were now the first to see something singularly light in the conduct of a young woman who would lose herself with naval officers.

The poor child had run into the room to report herself to me and explain how they had taken a wrong turning, which eventually led them to a village some five miles off. There she had felt so ill as to be unable to move until the young German had returned for a donkey, there being no road for carriages. She was evidently frightened and scared by the black looks of the very women who had been so sympathetic in theory a few minutes before.

Her reception was certainly discouraging. Miss Manns paused in the middle of what the scientists would call an "exhaustive" description of the neighbouring Saracenic villages, to which, however, through some inadvertency, no one seemed to be especially listening. I have described her eye as hard, but at the same time uneasy; it now assumed a glare directed at a spot just above Miss Jones's head which was little short of terrible to behold. There had been something of what diplomats call a coalition or rapprochement that evening. That is to say, Madame Toto and Miss Manns, who were not generally on speaking terms, had exchanged civilities in the drawing-room over poor little Miss Jones's misdemeanour. At the same moment, therefore, Madame Toto rose majestically, and gathering up her skirts and talking loudly to her dog, left the room. The invalid couple, too, whispered together, and putting on what seemed even an extra number of shawls, tottered after her.

Poor little Miss Jones! it remained only for the realistic French author, who seldom appeared in the drawing-room, but who at that moment was passing the open door, to give her a singularly open and admiring stare. He had hardly looked at her before during the weeks she had been at the pension; but the unfortunate episode of the evening had evidently raised her in

this gentleman's estimation as a worthy example of "La Femme."

The next morning I was called away by some friends at Nice, and having some business in that town was detained several days.

I was surprised to learn on my return to the Villa Clementine that Miss Jones was leaving the pension that day. What could her departure mean? I knew she had had the intention of remaining the winter. Was it possible that they were actually driving her away?

I went at once to Miss Jones's door, and nearly fell over two or three officious servants who, in view of a departure, were fussily proffering their services. Jules was already carrying her box to the door.

"You are going away?" I asked. The poor girl looked paler, smaller, and more transparent than ever, as she stood in the north light in her straight black clothes.

"Yes, yes," she answered in a tone of deep mortification. There was on her face an expression of pained bewilderment, a grievously hurt look, which I have not forgotten, although some six or seven years have passed since then.

I cannot explain why my heart went out in this strange way to a stranger. I knew nothing of her, the solitary facts I had gathered were that her father was in reduced circumstances, and that her sister had died of consumption. There was little I could do now at the last minute except give her my hand.

"Will you let me see you off?" I asked, thinking that the protection of an elder woman's presence might be some small comfort to her.

"It is very good of you," she answered simply, and then explained that she was going by the boat to Nice, where, it seems, there was some old school-mistress of hers, and that a cab would be at the door in a minute to take her down to the shore.

The drive was not long, but I had time to learn that Madame Toto had been instrumental in forcing Miss Jones's departure. It seems that she had represented to Madame Pleyel that not only she, but all the ladies in the pension, would leave unless the heroine of the mountain excursion was requested to go.

The result was inevitable. Facts are painfully prosaic in real life, and will not bend in aid of the weak and the lonely.

There seemed something almost ironical in the radiant sunshine and the gorgeous scene about us that afternoon. In the midst

of this bounteous Nature, where the orange and myrtle fringe the sea, and the fervent blue of the skies shines through the olive-groves on to violet and rose, they were banishing this wretched little consumptive. They were sending her out broadcast, as it were, into the great busy world, which is called callous because it has little time to give to strangers.

The steamer was already in sight, heaving gently on the broad swell of the glistening sapphire sea. Near inshore, in the fringe of surf which seems to kiss the orange-trees, the lazy brown-eyed sailors were waiting with a little boat to take up passengers for the larger vessel. I remember the small jokes they made in their strange mongrel tongue.

"Good-bye"—"good-bye," is all we said, and the small black figure stepped into the row-boat a minute before it pushed off. Just a glance from the small sad face, a flutter of a pocket-handkerchief, and I saw no more.

I think I said that some memories are as a part of ourselves, and for reasons which we cannot reason with. Why should I remember some seven years after that a stranger in an indifferent pension took on one particular day the steamer for Nice? Moreover, why should the circumstance affect me? I had already arrived at that comfortable stage in middle life when we are inclined to bear our neighbours' ills with philosophic fortitude. And this of all virtues is the one which grows with advancing years.

Why, then, did I experience a ridiculous sensation in the throat as I climbed the steps seven years ago, and how is it I remember so exactly the spot where I stood to see the last trail of smoke from the vanishing steamer?

I think it is because that trail of smoke, in some strange way, has become associated in my mind with all the vague, the unwritten, the unfinished acts of which life is full.

Is there not something pathetic in an unfinished story, when the hand is stilled while the page is still unwritten? The same feeling takes possession of me as, looking back, I think of that little solitary figure going out unknown and unfriended on that wide expanse of sea. Poor little Miss Jones I have neither seen nor heard of since. As the smoke of the steamer died out faintly on the glowing sky-line, so she, too, vanished from that day.

What has become of that young girl, whose face seemed to come back with its

one pathetic glance, as I watched the faint speck disappear on the pearly horizon?

What indeed! Is she alive or dead—is she well and happy, or have they laid her, some other winter, under the palms by the tideless sea? Has she forgotten her injuries, poor little girl, and has she forgotten Bordighera in the vague, unknown land to which she has gone?

WHAT WAS HE?

By THEO GIFT.

THE FIRST TIME.

I THINK it was in the second week of August, 1868, that it happened. I may not be quite right about the time of the month or the month itself; but I am almost sure it was in August; and I know it was that summer, the summer of 1868, that I spent in Switzerland.

We were staying at a pension kept by a Madame Vambéry, just outside the little town of Abondance, among the Swiss Alps. It was a charming place—a sort of big, rambling chalet, built on the wooded slope of a steep hill, commanding a glorious view of the snowy mountains which framed us in on all sides but one; and looking straight down on the little town, with its picturesque jumble of red roofs and twisted chimneys, and the narrow, rock-bound river.

We were a lively enough party at the chalet; Madame Vambéry being a pleasant woman, and having a knack of getting together young and pleasant inmates. I don't remember all of them, for they went and came, but I can recall a nice little Irish doctor; a handsome High Church clergyman and his sister, who went down to early mass regularly every morning in the town below; a French marquise, middle-aged, but fascinating; a newly-married couple, also French; and Helen Joyce, with whom I was travelling. I was then six-and-twenty, in high health and spirits, and unmarried; while she was still wearing her widow's weeds. Indeed it was as a help to recovering her spirits, which had been sorely tried by her husband's death, that I had agreed to spend the year in travelling with her.

Unquestionably, the most fascinating members of our party were the newly-married couple. They were both very young (she could scarcely have been eighteen), deliciously good-looking, over head and ears in love with one another, and had only been married a week! This

last fact naturally made them even more the central objects of observation and curiosity than they might otherwise have been; but, indeed, the young wife was pretty and innocent enough to attract notice anywhere, fresh from the convent-school, where she had passed all her young life, naïve as a babe and playful as a kitten, with big black eyes, most childishly round and liquid, a little head covered with short soft curls, and a complexion of milk and roses.

The husband, however, was even more remarkable for beauty: tall and slenderly made, with a perfectly oval face, long waving hair of a rich auburn colour, with pointed beard and moustache slightly deeper in tint, and eyes the like of which I had never seen before. They were indeed the chief feature in his face, and though I could not call them beautiful, as some did, they would have marked the man among a hundred others after years of forgetfulness.

If some of you think that this is an after fancy of mine, not existent at the time, but created by later impressions, you are wrong. What I say of them now I thought then, and even described them in a letter which is still extant. "Eyes not large, but looking so from a singular power of dilation in the pupil produced by any intensity of feeling, pleasant or the reverse; whites very convex, and with the dazzlingly opaque brilliancy of porcelain; iris of a bright golden colour, surrounded by an outer ring of deep greenish grey; the whole shaded, and made additionally noticeable by the straight, sharply-pencilled brows, inky-black, and slightly depressed towards the nose, a peculiarity which became intensified whenever their owner was excited to either irony or vexation, and which lent a curious and, to me, somewhat unpleasant expression to his face."

The other ladies voted him as handsome as an archangel. Mr. Hume, our clergyman, suggested, half-laughingly, "a fallen one!" but, whatever our opinions might be, they mattered very little to the subject of them. Those weirdly-brilliant eyes of his, with their orange-tawny light—a light which seemed to come from within, like those of the leopard and night-hawk—had vision for nothing but the charming face of his wife, while her innocent gaze seemed to lose itself in wondering admiration as it rested on him.

They were ridiculously in love with one another. We had been talking about the glaciers one day at table d'hôte. He had often been in Switzerland before, and was

describing some of his feats in Alpine climbing the while his girl-wife listened delightedly, and now and then put in a whisper to one of us.

"N'est ce pas qu'il est tout à fait montagnard, mon mari?"

Later in the evening, I happened to be out in the garden. It was not a large one, but had the effect of being so from being laid out in a succession of terraces cut out of the steep hillside, and planted thickly with all manner of flowering shrubs and fragrant, bright-hued blossoms. Strolling along the upper of these terraces, I was gazing out to where the great white mountains showed forth against a sapphire sky, set thick with golden star-gleams, and inhaling the delicious fragrance of the pine-woods on the other side of the little river at our feet, when I became aware of the presence of our young lovers on the path below me. They were chatting in a little nook formed by a bench and the angle of the wall; he half kneeling on the former, and supporting her as she sat on the wall, her little feet crossed and hanging down in front of her, her slender chiklish figure pressed against his shoulder. She had on a black lace frock, cut so as to leave the neck and arms bare; and her pretty shoulders, charmingly white and dimpled, gleamed like soft mounds of snow in the moonlight.

"Eh bien, mon chéri," I could hear her saying in her clear little child-voice, "to-morrow, then, thou wilt take me up to the mountains, and show me where to pick the 'edelweiss' to show my mother when we return?"

"If we can find a guide," the husband answered; "but they say one ought to engage them the day before, there are so many excursionists here at present."

The little bride pouted, and struck him a playful blow on the mouth with a bunch of heliotrope which she held in her hand. The perfume crushed against his lips rose up to me in a sweet, sharp puff.

"Guides! What do we want with guides? Have you not told me how well you know these mountains, and how often you have been over them alone? You shall be my guide, Henri. I want no others, point d'étrangers."

"But suppose any accident should happen to you, petite ange?"

"Accident! What accident? We are not going up Mont Blanc, and the 'pasteur Anglais' takes his sister always with him. Est-ce que tu me crois poltronne, moi?"

"Je te crois tout à fait adorable," he answered, and, stooping down, lifted her little sandalled shoe and kissed it. I thought it time to retire, and did so; but there had been no vulgar curiosity in my staying so long. They did their love-making perfectly openly, and there were several others besides me enjoying the perfumed air on those terraced walks.

Next evening, when we came home from our drive, we found the whole pension in a state of the greatest excitement and confusion. The marquise was in hysterics, Miss Hume's maid crying bitterly in the hall, while Madame, pale as death, and with her hair all limp and unfrizzled, was giving distracted orders to half-a-dozen servants at once. She could only answer our questions in incoherent ejaculations.

"The most frightful accident—our dear young bride and bridegroom. Alas! that poor man. No, no, it was not he. It was his wife; that charming, fresh, all-adorable child. She had ventured too near a crevasse to pluck a flower. The piece of snow on which she stood, loosened by the late rains, had slipped and she had fallen. Heaven preserve us, it was too horrible to think of. Some one had heard the cries of the poor husband, and had come to the rescue, but it was too late. She was dead—dead! They were bringing her body home now. And the poor husband? Hélas! why ask? They said he had tried to kill himself, too. The guides who lifted her from the crevasse had to restrain him by force from flinging himself in."

It was too true.

That same night Miss Hume and I went in to see the body. It had been laid out in a lower room, and hearing that the poor child's mother had been telegraphed for, we had gathered all the white flowers we could find to strew round the corpse, and so soften the sorrowful sight to those to whom it must have been agony to gaze upon it.

It was a far more terrible one to us than we had expected. Not that there were any horrible facial wounds or disfigurement. Curiously enough, as the servants had already told us, there was not a broken bone or a bruise on the whole body. Indeed it must have been the mere shock of falling from such a giddy height that killed her, for she was found, quite uninjured outwardly, lying on a bed of soft snow at the bottom of the crevasse. But to look on the expression of her young face, one would have thought she had died in the most awful agony, so ghastly was the look

frozen there in death—a look, not of pain, but of unutterable, indescribable fear, of frenzied horror and repulsion; while the tiny waxen hands which some pious soul had tried to bind together cross-wise on the breast, were bent backwards, with the stiffened fingers curving towards the palm, as though warding off some sudden unimaginable horror.

Miss Hume could hardly bear the sight. She put her hand over the contorted features, and said faintly:

"Oh, would not one think there was no loving God behind death when a little girl can meet it so? Fancy a mother having only that look to remember her child's face by! Has no one a veil to cover it?"

I said I had, and sending her away, for she was quite unnerved, went to get it.

When I returned I forgot to bring a candle with me, and found the room in darkness, save for a broad stripe of moonlight falling through a window at one end of it upon the bier, with its slender white-robed occupant, which stood in the centre of the floor. Not thinking that there was anyone else in the room, I was going in softly, when I stepped back, shocked and startled at finding myself in the presence of the widower. He had not seen me. He was standing on the farther side of the bier, his tall figure slightly bent over it, his arms raised high above his head, with the hands wreathed together and waving to and fro, as if in utterance of some prayer or malediction against the woe which had fallen on him; while, though the spot where he stood was all the darker for being just outside that one ray of light, I could see his eyes dilated to double their usual size, and blazing like two unearthly lamps with a ghastly yellow glare, which seemed to positively irradiate the dark and tortured face beneath them.

Fully believing that the man had gone out of his mind with grief, I fled, pale and terrified, to my room, where I found Helen's maid was already packing our things for going. She said that, considering the state of her mistress's health and spirits, she had persuaded her not to remain in a house with death so soon after her own sad loss, and that, after some discussion, Helen had agreed to leave on the morrow. I was not sorry to hear it.

THE SECOND TIME.

"WELL, be sure and call me if I can be of any use, Mrs. Critchett."

"I will, ma'am, thank you; and glad I

should be to do so if it were in the night, and the nurse not here. They have engaged one. I made a point of it when I let 'em the rooms; seeing as how that was a thing I could not feel called on for, with my other lodgers to see to and all. But from what she says now, I shouldn't be a bit surprised if it was before the time."

"Has she no mother, Mrs. Critchett?"

"She has not, ma'am, which is maybe the reason I feel for her, being young too, as I said, and more ignorant of the world and its wickedness than nine out o' ten gurls nowadays. A most pious and godly a young creetur as ever I see; an' not over strong. Sits there doing her bits of sewing for the baby as is coming, with her Bible on her knee all day long, and sleeps with it under her piller at night. Even my 'usband, he says it's as good as reading a chapter to hear her talk; which no offence to you, ma'am, all the same, as of course she is nothing but a Quaker, which nat'rally you, being a clergyman's wife, might object to have anythink to do with."

"I should object to myself very much, Mrs. Critchett, if I had any such feeling, or my husband either; so don't forget to mention to your young lodger that if she feels nervous or ailing, there is a lady upstairs who will be very glad to come and see her, or help her in any way."

It was the winter of 1875. I had been married nearly six years, and John and I were living in lodgings in Guildford Street, Bloomsbury. I should have preferred a house of my own; but circumstances made lodgings more practicable to us just then; and these were very clean and comfortable, and kept by an exceedingly worthy woman. We had the drawing-rooms and the best bedrooms above; and besides us there were in the house three other lodgers: a clerk in some City house and his wife, who occupied the dining-rooms, and a queer old bachelor, who lived in one room at the top of the house, and whom we had never yet seen, though he was an older resident than ourselves, and we had lived with Mrs. Critchett for over three years. As for the couple downstairs, they had only been there for three months; and all I knew of them was that I used to get a glimpse of him now and then going into the City of a morning, a stoutish, thick-set young man, with light hair and a florid complexion; that he and his wife had not been married long; and that she was understood to be in a delicate state of health.

Probably for that reason she went out

very seldom, except after dusk, and leaning on her husband's arm; and though I had passed her two or three times on the staircase, or at the door of her room, I had no very distinct impression of her, save of a fair, slenderly-made young woman, with a very good, pure-looking face, to which her simple dove-coloured gowns and muslin caps lent a certain soft attractiveness.

My offer to be of any service to her in her trouble, however, had not come a day too soon, for that very night the summons arrived. About nine o'clock Mrs. Critchett came running to tell me that "poor Mrs. Page was took bad. Her husband had gone for the nurse and doctor, and would I mind stepping down and comforting her a bit?" Of course I went. There was not very much for me to do, however, though my inclination to do it was enhanced now that I had time to appreciate more thoroughly the absolute beauty of holiness shining from the pale young face which I found lying so patiently on its pillows below. She was very weak, and suffering a great deal, but she made no complaint or fuss, and indeed hardly spoke. When the doctor arrived, he said all was going on as well as possible; and, indeed, a very few minutes after Mr. Page returned with the nurse (who lived at the other side of London, and who had not expected to be wanted so soon), everything was over, and there was a tiny citizen the more in the world.

I had gone back to my own rooms by then, not wishing to be in the way, and thinking that between husband, nurse, doctor, and landlady, those very small apartments downstairs would be sufficiently tenanted. Indeed I was in the act of telling John, who had just come in, all about it, and what a nice gentle creature the young Quaker wife seemed to be, when the stillness which had followed pleasantly on the late bustle and upset in the house, was broken by a sudden hoarse shriek; then an opening and shutting of doors, and the sound of footsteps hurrying to and fro.

"Something is wrong. What can it be, John?" I said, getting up, and looking apprehensively at my husband, and almost in the same moment Mrs. Critchett's maid came to the door with a breathless message:

"Oh, if you please, ma'am, missis says could you come at once. She thinks Mrs. Page is going."

"Going!" By the time I had got from my room to hers, it was plain that she was

looked would never know me or any earthly thing again on this side of the grave. In sober truth, I hardly knew her! The apartment had been tidied and put straight. There was a pleasant glow of fire and lamp-light in it, the latter carefully shaded from the face which lay back upon its pillows just as I had left it barely an hour ago. But during that short time such a change had come over the features as no mere womanish pain or distress had had power to bring into them before; and beneath which all that exquisite, calm trustfulness, which had been their principal characteristic before, was blotted out as completely as though a livid and alien mask had been pressed down upon them. And such a mask! Such a ghastly presentment of unutterable woe, horror, and repulsion—agonised, terror-stricken repulsion, as I had never, in all my life, seen on any human face before, save once—the face of that girl-bride who had perished in the Swiss Alps.

I had forgotten her. The whole incident had slipped from my mind until recalled to it now, seven years afterwards, by that never-to-be-forgotten look of mortal, unendurable terror, repeated even in the very pose of the poor hands which, damp and clammy in death's closing grasp, were yet lifted up with the palm turned outwards and the fingers slightly curved, as though in a last effort to thrust from her some thing, or some vision, too horrible to see and live.

She was not quite dead, however, though the only sign of life was a faint convulsive shivering of the limbs and lips; and both the nurse and landlady vied with me in striving, by applications of ice, brandy, etc., to recall the fast-ebbing sands of existence, the while the last-named woman answered as well as she could my horror-stricken enquiries as to the cause of the terrible change before me.

"Ma'am, she was going on as well as possible. Very weak, but nothing in the world wrong; though the baby, poor thing, is but a measly bit of a creature and not like to live, the doctor says. He had done all as was needed, and was in a hurry to get off to another case he had, so after he'd spoke to Mr. Page, and told him he might go in and see his wife (as was asking for him), off he went. I let him out myself, and then went into the little back room there to nurse, who was 'tending to the baby. She told me she'd just shown the gentleman in here, and bid him be careful not to

seemed no fear of, for he went in as soft and quiet as a mouse, while she was lying smiling on her bed like any angel, so calm and still.

" 'And an angel she's been all through,' I said, when the words were hardly out of my mouth but there came a shriek from this room as you might have heard upstairs, and as hardly sounded like her voice, though we knew it couldn't be no other. Nurse and me we rushed in, and there she was sitting bolt upright in bed with her arms lifted up and her face like it is now, and him—Mr. Page, I mean—trying to lay her down and soothe her.

"We put her back almost by force like. for she seemed quite unconscious and stiff as if she was in a fit; and he began telling us as he'd hardly said a word when a donkey, as was kept in a yard near by, suddenly brayed out loud, and so startled her that she sprang up in bed with the scream we heard, when nurse here she stopped him in his story and bid him run for dear life after the doctor and fetch him back.

" 'Never mind what frightened her,' said she, 'but go this minnit. She's dying now, an' if you don't catch up with him she'll be gone before you get back.' "

There was a knock at the door at that instant, and with the exclamation, "There he is!" Mrs. Critchett broke off in her narrative and hurried out. A second later and we heard her opening the front door, and speaking volubly to some one there; then steps coming along the corridor, and another voice—a voice which somehow sent a cold, strange thrill through me, though I had no recollection of ever having heard it before—asking in tones which, low as they were, penetrated clearly to where I stood, "Is she still alive?"

Someone else heard the question besides me—the dying woman. I was holding her, supported on my arm; and at the first sound of that voice I felt a sharp swift shiver run through her entire frame, while for one instant the secret horror hidden behind those glazed and staring eyeballs flashed into sudden life. The white lips met with a sharp, hissing gasp, and then dropped apart. The hands fell heavily at her side, the eyelids closed.

She had died—died while her husband was still asking if she lived.

Involuntarily I sank down upon my knees and bowed my head upon the bed-clothes. At such a moment—the moment when a soul is suddenly torn away from earth and set before the judgment-seat of

God—prayer seems the fittest and only attitude for those called on to witness the solemn change. Another step had, however, already entered the room, and as it slowly advanced to the foot of the bed I looked up, meaning to say such poor words of sympathy or comfort as might come to my lips to aid the man so terribly stricken in the first recognition of his bereavement.

They were never uttered! Instead, I found myself staggering dumbly to my feet, with eyes fixed and staring, and a sudden icy coldness at my heart, as though every drop of blood there had been jerked violently upwards to my confused and startled brain. Where—where and when had I seen before—not this man now facing me, this plain, dull-browed, sandy-haired English clerk, with whose back-view only I had hitherto been familiar—not him; but his eyes! eyes unlike in shape and colour every other feature in his face, dark and sinister, with abnormally dilated pupils, black, sharply-lined brows, with a deep depression towards the centre of the nose, and irises of a lurid orange hue which seemed to glow and scintillate as with some inward flame!

I have no remembrance of how I left the room.

Next morning, before I was up, John spoke very seriously to me, warning me never to say to anyone else what I had told him the previous night, and blaming me for letting my imagination (as he called it) affect my nerves and moral judgment in the way it had done. He pointed out to me that sudden death might not unnaturally leave a more painful expression on the face than a gentle or lingering one, and that it was the recollections suddenly recalled to me by this one when I was tired and over-excited, and not any real resemblance, which had induced me to fancy a likeness between our fellow-lodger and the handsome young Frenchman of seven years back.

He told me also that he had seen the former several times, and could not detect anything weird or unusual in his eyes save that they, as well as the brows, were rather darker than the general tone of his colouring warranted; and that from what he heard from the nurse and doctor, he was of opinion that the poor young woman's death resulted from perfectly natural causes, and such as would most probably be induced in a nervous woman in her condition by any sudden fright or strain to the system. He

said this and a good deal more, and I listened and was silent. I even tried to believe that he was right, and did not ask:

"But was she a nervous woman, or one peculiarly the reverse, and why should I, on whose strength and common-sense you have relied for six years, and who has stood by you beside many and many a death-bed, and helped you to comfort all sorts and conditions of mourners, turn suddenly, and without any cause, nervous and fanciful also?"

That evening Mrs. Critchett came to tell me that baby was dead, and that the widower had given her notice, saying that he could not bear to stay in the house. She added:

"Not that a day-old child can make much difference to him, poor man; and for my part, I think it's better out of the way. It was miserably delicate from the first, and had the queerest eyes, black and uncanny as a little imp's. For that matter there's something about the father's—Heaven forgive me for saying it of him, poor soul!—which always makes me feel a bit creepy. Did you ever notice them, ma'am?"

THE THIRD TIME.

WHAT follows is taken from my last year's note-book, the Christmas week of 1882. I copy it just as it stands, without any alteration whatever, save as regards the actual names of the town and people concerned in it. As I am still living in the former, and my husband is rector of the parish, it might possibly be injurious to him or others were I to omit this one caution.

Nov. 25th.—Just a month to Christmas, our first Christmas at the rectory! What a stately, comfortable sound it has, and how well it suits John! He seems actually growing stouter to fit it. Martha tells me that the house adjoining ours is let at last. I am glad of it, for it is a serious drawback to our pretty, cheerful home to be obliged to look out on those desolate, weed-grown gardens, those rows of gaunt and shuttered windows. It is a large house too, and one of the oldest in the place. They say one wing dates back nearly two hundred years, but it belongs to a family who do not live there, and it has been unlet for a long time. I believe there is some talk of its being haunted, and that tenants will not stay in it. I hope the new ones will prove exceptions to the rule. It is quite cheering even to see the huge iron gates standing open, and painters and glaziers already hard at work all over the premises.

Nov. 30th.—I have been listening to a terrible story to-day, a ghost story, too, of all things in the world for a sober rector's wife to give ear to; but as it relates to the Priory (the name by which the house adjoining ours is known), and explains the horror with which even the school-children regard that mansion, I thought I might be excused for letting the old woman who comes to mend my carpets give me her version of the legend in question. I need hardly say that she believes in it most implicitly.

It seems that about a hundred years ago it belonged to a member of the Thorpe family, who had made a very unfortunate marriage. That is to say, he had married a very young and lovely girl who had all the outward semblances of purity and innocence, and who, nevertheless, turned out to be as shamelessly wicked as what old Mrs. Luton calls, "the baddest lot in the town." Not content with being false to her husband, she used his absence in America, on diplomatic business connected with our ratification of the lately-fought-out independence of the colonies there, to turn the dignified old Priory into a pandemonium of such reckless license and dissipation, as filled the whole county with the scandal of the doings there, and caused her dissolute companions to be publicly hooted in the streets of the little town.

It is surmised that she and one of them had planned an elopement to take place before the return of the injured husband from abroad, and so place her in safety from his wrath; but if so, her scheme was frustrated. Major Thorpe returned three weeks sooner than had been expected, and was met on landing by an old servant who had left the Priory in disgust at the scenes enacted there, and lost no time in acquainting his master with them.

The scene which followed must have been a terrible one. At first, indeed, Major Thorpe said nothing, but struck down and went nigh to murder the man who had dared to blacken his wife's fame to him; but when convinced of the truth of his story, he lifted his two arms to heaven and swore so terrible an oath of vengeance as curdled the very blood of the listener, offering himself to perish everlastingly if for those dishonoured seven months of his absence he might be allowed, not only to punish her who had polluted them, but once in seven years to wreak such residue of his wrongs as her mere death could not atone for. On some other woman

young and pure and innocent as she had seemed to be, and so satisfy his tortured soul for the worse torture that first woman had inflicted on him.

Next day, it was rumoured among some in the town that Major Thorpe had been seen in the neighbourhood; and one old gardener even swore to having seen a figure which he recognised as his master's lurking among the shrubs in the Priory garden; but no hint of this reached the guilty revellers within, or perhaps they might even then have escaped the doom hanging over them.

That same night, a sudden cry of "Fire!" was raised in the quiet old town; and folks, roused from their sleep and rushing to the spot, saw flames pouring from the lower windows of that part of the Priory which Mrs. Thorpe inhabited. The servants, who slept in another wing, were already awakened, and had made good their escape; but all their attempts at rescuing their mistress proved futile, the door opening from the great hall to her suite of apartments being found to be locked and barred; while through crack and keyhole poured a crimson glow which showed that all within was already a sea of roaring flame.

And then, while the shrieks of the victims within and of the crowd without rent the air—and while some ran for water and some for ladders, and some fled hiding their eyes for very fear and horror—there was seen at one of the upper windows an awful sight; for there, during the space of one minute, there appeared, as if painted against a curtain of lurid red and framed in wreaths of smoke, three figures—a man and woman, and between them Major Thorpe, holding a hand of each, clasped together in the iron clutch of one of his, while with the other he levelled a pistol menacingly at the head of the man, whose left arm hung, evidently broken, at his side; the while the woman writhed and shrieked and clung to him with vain cries for mercy.

For one second, I say, this was visible. The next, there came an awful crash, as though a magazine had exploded at their feet, and in a breath the whole front of the house, roof, windows, walls and all, disappeared and crumbled away in a vast sheet of white flame which shot high into the air and sank down, carrying those three figures with it.

No portion of their bodies were found when the ruins came to be searched afterwards; and in course of time, the

Thorpe family rebuilt the house as it now stands, and announced it as to let; but already an evil name had accrued to it. People spoke of cries issuing from the empty rooms, and of a shadowy male form seen prowling along the galleries of the one wing of the ancient building still remaining, or in the deserted garden; and though tenants came, it was only to go again the more quickly.

It remains to be seen if the new people—an Indian colonel and his wife—will be braver.

But I am half ashamed to have listened to such a farrago of romance and superstition after all. I hope no one will whisper a word of it to my little Joa. He is fond of making his way into that garden and playing there.

Dec. 15.—They are come, and I have seen them; that is, I have had a distant view of them from my bedroom window, as they stood on their lawn together—he, a tall, white-haired, soldierly-looking man, with a long moustache; she, a singularly slender, graceful woman, in black, with a large silver cross round her neck, and seemingly much the younger of the two. People who have met them tell me they are both delightful, and the greatest acquisitions to the place that it has had for years; but I fear we are not fated to know much of them. Colonel Thorpe (he is a distant cousin of the owners of the house) is an avowed Freethinker, and his beautiful wife—what sounds far worse in the ears of our good townsfolk—a Roman Catholic! "A most devout one too," Lady Fanshawe, our patron's wife, told me. "Had set her heart on going into a convent when Colonel Thorpe met her and fell so in love with her that he persuaded her to marry him instead. A sweet creature, with a delicious nun-like unworldliness added to her new matronhood, which makes me quite in love with her myself. You mustn't call there, however. That bad colonel hates parsons, and swears he won't have anyone from a parson's house inside his. Isn't it dreadful of him?"

"And his wife?" I said.

"Oh, my dear, didn't I tell you she was a Romanist, and you know the ill-feeling here against the late rector for his ritualistic tendencies. It would never do for you or your husband to seem to run after her. Your parishioners would be in arms against you at once."

Dec. 23rd.—Something has happened which has upset me terribly. I do not know

what to think of it, whether I am under a delusion, or am not so strong as I was ; or what it portends, if indeed it portends anything. If John were only here ! but he left yesterday for Dullminster on a visit to the bishop, and will not be back till this afternoon. Perhaps, too, he would only laugh at me. Once before, that time in Bloomsbury, he said it was imagination ; and now—— But I had better write it all down. Perhaps if it looks ridiculous on paper, I may be able to feel the foolishness of it in myself.

I was going down to the church yesterday afternoon to see about the decorations. There is a narrow lane dividing the Priory grounds from the churchyard, which makes a short cut from our house to the latter ; and along this I was hurrying, when, midway in it, I encountered Colonel Thorpe. He was carrying a leather hand-bag, as if bound on a journey, and as it was the first time I had had an opportunity of seeing him close, I naturally slackened my pace a little, so as to get a better view of him. Believe me when I say it, I had no other thought in my mind, no other motive than the natural womanly curiosity to look at one who was not only our nearest neighbour, but a man of good position in the county ; and my first glance at the tall erect figure, the white locks, and long grey moustache gave me a distinct feeling of admiration. In the same moment, however, I was conscious of a change coming over me ; a kind of coldness, mingled with a nervous thrill, which quickened as he drew nearer. Instinctively I hung back, a sort of chilled expectancy, though of what I knew not, clogging my steps ; while by contrary impulse, dread, blended with desire, drew my eyes more eagerly to his. A double wave of memory seemed to sweep over me—sharp peaks of dazzling snow rising against a sapphire sky, the scent of heaped white flowers on a silent form ; and anon a close sick-room, cold clutching hands, and the wail of a babe near by. A mist was gathering over my gaze, my hands felt cold, my head giddy ; and instead of the man before me, I seemed to see the outline of a window filled with lurid flame, and gleaming out of it a pair of eyes, fierce, dark, with hugely dilated pupils, and irises of a tawny yellow, glowing like two hellish coals with inward fire ; the very eyes—Heaven help me now, as I speak the truth !—which seven years before had met mine over the lifeless body of the City clerk's

before that, had lit with such a wild and ghastly glare the dark face of the young Frenchman in the Swiss chalet. And then, in the same moment, the mist cleared, and I saw the eyes only, and knew that they were in Colonel Thorpe's face, and that they recognised me !

Aye, believe it or not, they did ; and I knew it, not by any process which I could describe to you, but by that nameless sympathetic flash and thrill, that upleaping 'something' in the gaze, which says to you, and everyone meeting it, whether they can answer it or not, "I know you !"

There was no syllable spoken, no pause on either side. We met, and passed, and I went on to the church, but in such a tumult of feeling as I pray that I may never experience again—shaken, and filled by such an overpowering sense of some terrible impending calamity, which shook me to my very centre with impotent terror and anxiety.

For what could I do, or say, that would not proclaim me a hopeless maniac, were I to strive to avert an evil, which even in my madness (if madness it was) I could not dare to put into words, could I find words to put it in, and which all the time I feel myself helplessly powerless to avert ? Was I to call at the Priory, to intrude on its stately young mistress, and implore her to fly from her home and seek shelter with a stranger like me, from her own natural protector, the husband for whose love she had given up her own holiest hopes and ambitions ? And yet it was over her head that I knew the doom to be impending ; and, hour by hour, as I sat trying to work or read in my own peaceful house, I felt it coming nearer and nearer to the ill-fated one adjoining us, and saw again the mocking pitiless gleam of those eyes defying me to war against the lost soul behind them.

And it only wanted two days to Christmas. Everything else looked so gay, so tranquil. I even caught a glimpse of her during the day speaking to a couple of poor tramps at the gate, and bringing them bread and meat in her own hands.

I must hurry on.

When night came I could not sleep. I had felt better and more cheerful during the evening. In fact I had taken the trouble to ascertain that Colonel Thorpe had really been starting for London when I saw him that afternoon, and would not return till next day. The doom, then, whatever it might be, was not to fall immediately on its innocent victim. Providence

warding it off, and directly I felt this my spirits rose, and I even felt able to laugh at myself for my forebodings, and to feel glad John was not at home to scold me for them.

But after I was in bed sleep would not come to me. I was not ill or feverish, my head did not ache. There was nothing the matter with me except that, try as I might, my eyes would not close in slumber. I remained wide awake for a couple of hours or more, and at last, wearied of lying thus, got up and went to the window, meaning to look out at the night before lighting a candle and trying to read myself to sleep.

It was then just on the stroke of one. The whole town was asleep and over everything reigned perfect stillness. Opposite me was the Priory, shuttered and silent too, and its gardens white with frost and bathed in the full rays of the moon, save where a belt of trees or shrubbery cast darkly-waving shadows on the silvered surface.

I was still gazing, when suddenly one of these shadows seem to detach itself from the rest, and glide forward with a motion suggestive of some crouching creature unwilling to be seen. Involuntarily the old woman's story of the Priory ghost flashed back upon my mind, and I leant forward to see better; but in the same moment the moon had passed behind a cloud, and the shade disappeared, sucked back into the general obscurity of the shrubs through which it had seemed to be creeping; only for an instant, however. The next, the full silver orb rode out again calm and bright as ever upon the blue expanse, and as it did so the bushes swayed and parted, and out from among them stepped a tall black figure, which stood erect in the moonbeams—no ghost, but a man, and the man I had thought of at that moment as far and safely away—Colonel Thorpe!

There was no mistaking him; no possibility of delusion. For two full seconds he stood there in the white moonlight, dressed as I had seen him earlier in the day, with his blanched hair and long curved moustache glittering in the silver rays, and then plunged again into the shadow, and disappeared in the direction of the house.

January 30, 1883.—It is many weeks since I have written in my diary. I have been ill for almost the first time in my life—very ill. They would not even let

me write letters for some time, but now that I am well and feeling strong again I must add a few words.

I think it was about mid-day on Christmas Eve that the news reached us that young Mrs. Thorpe was dead. The lady's-maid had found her bed unslept in in the morning, and on search being made she was discovered in the library (a room in the older part of the house) on her knees, and stone dead. It seemed that she had told the maid on the previous evening not to wait up for her, as she had promised to do some copying for the colonel, which might keep her up late; and from her position, combined with the papers on the table and an overturned chair behind her, it was surmised that she had been suddenly startled from her occupation by some sight or sound—though what none could say—and had actually died of fright.

Colonel Thorpe was away in London at the time, but by a curious chance had left for home before the telegram summoning him arrived, and appeared among the bewildered and terrified servants within half an hour of their discovery of his wife's body. One of them told me afterwards it was a sight to make the bravest shudder—he standing there gazing at her as if turned into stone, and she, his wife, stretched at his feet with that awful look of terror—the terror that had killed her—still staring dumbly from her dead face, and the silver cross she generally wore held stiffly up in both the poor cold hands, as if in mute appeal to Heaven.

The husband has gone abroad again now, and the Priory is once more untenanted. They say it will be pulled down. After what has happened this time no one will ever live in it again.

With this fragment from my diary, my story ends. I have nothing more to say, and no arguments to put forward. If indeed such a thing be possible as that the curse of a lost and reckless soul should be allowed to take actual form and shape, and by the mere revelation for one instant of its infernal personality, crush out instantaneously and irremediably the spark of life in its hapless victims, it is not for me to say, nor is this the place for the discussion of such suggestions. All I can do is to state the facts as they occurred. If to other minds they offer an easier explanation, I am glad of it.

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE		PAGE
EUNICE KINNAIRD	1	OLD SHAWBURTON'S	34
A LITTLE AVERSION	12	AMONG THE HILLS	43
IN A FLOWER-MARKET	24	IN THE SPRING-TIME	51
HETTY'S DOWRY		63	

EUNICE KINNAIRD.

CHAPTER I.

"I THINK that was a good sermon, Eunice."

"It was a beautiful sermon," I answer enthusiastically.

"I meant it to tell; I put my whole heart into it," uncle says, turning his worn face towards my eager young one.

"Every bit of it was beautiful," I say with eager evasion, for I would not let Uncle James know that the ticking of the round clock in front of the gallery, the heavy bobbing and buzzing of a bumble-bee against the window-panes, and the scents of mown hay and clover-blossoms stealing through the open doors, were all part of the day-dream into which his voice wove itself somnolently.

"That is the best of a good thought; it acquires a new beauty through utterance," uncle goes on with innocent faith in my sympathy and comprehension. "You polish it, and turn it this way and that way in your study; but in the pulpit, with the people listening, it acquires a separate life of its own, and appeals to yourself as well as your audience."

"But your whole life appeals," I answer with hearty irrelevance. "Why, uncle, you don't need to preach, so long as people can see how you live."

We are on our way home from service, and it is a beautiful, bright, sunshiny Sabbath, with scarcely a cloud in the grey-

blue sky. The treeless landscape is at its fairest, for the meadows and waysides are alive with blossoms. Over the dusty roads, stretching to right and left of the bare bleak church, the worshippers are straggling slowly, their footsteps raising faint clouds of dust as they pass. Now and then a bonnet nods to another bonnet, or a head-shake emphasises a criticism, but no sound of living voice reaches us, for the Sabbath involves the decorum of whispered talk on the way home from service.

The little stream of men and women has spent ten minutes over its exit from the square whitewashed building, and now forms itself into groups of two and three which move soberly forward; uncle, who has delayed to divest himself of gown and bands, and I, who have waited for him, bringing up the rear. Twenty yards ahead of us, aunt, with her long gown caught up at one side, and dipping into the dust at every step on the other, and her Paisley shawl pinned close to her throat, despite the warmth of the atmosphere, is progressing slowly, because half-a-dozen of her active offspring are circling round her and impeding her progress—they alone of all the neighbourhood caring not a fig for the nearness of the minister or the sanctity of the day.

There are eight of them, eight lusty boys and girls who call uncle, father; and there are two of us, his nieces, Nellie and I, aged fifteen and eighteen, with as high spirits and as healthy appetites as belong to our

years ; and there are uncle and aunt, and all the small dignity of their position to be supported on his poor income. It was more than pitiful—it was cruel, and the helplessness and hopelessness of his poverty were killing him by inches, though it was only very recently that this had been borne in on me.

The minister and his wife had been in their best circumstances when they adopted us soon after their marriage, but even if their burden had been as heavy as it afterwards became, I am quite sure they would have acted just the same. We had no tie of kinship to anyone but them, as far as they knew, and our good, easy father, with his artistic temperament and costly tastes and innate certainty of living as long as other people, had not thought of making any provision for us, and so we came to the manse when he died, and continued there, as a matter of course.

Aunt and uncle met their later fate as differently as might have been anticipated from their character. Aunt grew dull and indifferent; let the children develop according to nature, without restraining or educating efforts on her part; and fell into ways of depressing narration, showing from her own experience the uselessness of virtue and religion. In uncle's case it seemed as if the current of his earthly hopes, having been rudely checked, had set steadily towards holy things. I never saw his worn face lifted above the faded pulpit-cushion without looking round to see if its spirituality did not reflect itself on some bucolic countenance near me.

But on the Sabbath in question I was not thinking of the sermon, for a plan of enriching the family coffers had taken shape, and, for the moment, filled my entire imagination. Naturally the plan never came to anything, for I had no education and no experience that extended beyond the manse and its surroundings; but it has always been the prerogative of youth to soar above the barriers of the possible. That was how it happened that, in all loyalty to uncle, I had not listened to a word he said.

June is the sweetest month of the year in a country as sparsely wooded as ours. What did it matter that the hills showed their bare sides on either hand, and that the houses, dotted here and there through the cup of the valley, stood out assertively, without any picturesque drapery of foliage to hide their defects, when every ditch was rich with long grasses and waving ferns,

every hedge glowing with the dog-rose, and every meadow pied with daisies and the starry blossoms of the dandelion ?

Uncle and I talk little as we walk home together. He is tired, and I know that, and the flaming gorse and lazily drifting clouds, and birds that carol from every bush, afford us both companionship enough. Uncle and I understand each other's moods, and, no doubt, that is why we are such thorough friends.

Presently, after a long silence, we hear a step striding swiftly over the dusty road behind us.

"Is it you, Hugh?"

Uncle turns in a little surprise, and offers his hand to the new comer with paternal cordiality.

"Yes; I have been following you."

He shakes hands with me too, in a shy, constrained way, and his face is flushed.

"I am going away to-morrow, and I wished to say good-bye."

His chest rises with a half sigh as he speaks, though his eyes are very bright and fearless.

He is a tall young man and dark, with a slim, sinewy figure, and a refined, ugly face. When I say ugly, I mean that there is not one classic feature in the face from brow to chin, but the eyes are very keen and frank, and the mouth is grave and sweet.

"And you think you are doing wisely?" uncle asks with his sad, reflective smile.

"Yes, I think so. To do anything great one must get among great possibilities. Here I need not starve, but then one has higher ambitions than to eat and not perish when one is young."

"True."

Uncle's head droops a little. He has had ambitions too, but he does not damp the young fellow's courage by reminding him of these, and of their result.

"And what are your plans?" he asks after a moment's silence.

"I have not told that to anyone yet. I don't mean to tell it, lest it should bring bad luck. I think we can bear disappointment better when no one knows how much we have essayed. But I may say this, that I mean to study."

"To study!"

I look up at him with a sudden access of interest.

"Yes; that is why I am going to Glasgow, where education and living are cheap. I shall get work there, and, when I can afford it, I shall take the classes, and perhaps some

day I shall come back to visit you a full-fledged doctor."

He laughs a little, but his voice is husky.

"I hope with all my heart you may succeed," uncle says fervently.

He knows when to speak and when to be silent, and so he does not add what doubtless is in his own heart, that a profession is not a goal, but a starting-point; that you may attain to that, and yet recognise sorrowfully afterwards that you are a failure.

"And how long will all that take?" I ask, with youth's impatience for immediate results.

"Six years, or more; and I am twenty-one now. It's a pity, is it not?" looking at me wistfully.

"A great pity. And then there is all the trouble in between. Now, if you could only go to sleep, and awake and find yourself finished!"

"I should not wish that. Things are better worth having when you must contend to get them. And, as to work, life is work when it is worthy of the name."

"And very profitless work, for the most part," I answer.

And then I drop behind to make selections from the wild-flowers along the way, and to wish that I were a man like Hugh Forrester, with some possibility before me to strive for.

We stop at last by the manse-gate.

"You will dine with us, won't you, Hugh?" uncle says with his ready hospitality.

"Thank you, I should like to stay, but they will expect me at home; and besides——"

"Oh, they will know where you are, and Mrs. Kinnaird will be very grieved if you turn away from our door."

So he comes in with a certain reluctant gladness, and aunt welcomes him cordially enough.

In books poverty is always made graceful somehow, and so it ought to be when authors are poets; but in real life I have never observed its charm. Our poverty was ugly in every detail; even the children, with their ill-fitting clothes and bad manners, seemed only a feature of the general impecuniosity. Uncle had grown accustomed to the small, over-filled dining-room, to the defective table appointments, and to the general bad behaviour of his offspring; but the presence of even such an uncritical guest as Hugh Forrester seemed to make

him realise everything that day with painful keenness. There was a rare flush on his cheeks as he helped the salt-beef and cabbages on to the chipped plates, and his sharp rebuke to Teddy for drumming on the table with the bowl of his spoon reduced that young gentleman to noisy tears.

But the dreariest things are got over at last; the pudding was eaten, grace was said, and then the juveniles, with a whoop, departed to sun themselves on the open space before the manse-door, and to fight a little in the process.

Half an hour later Hugh rose to go. Leave-taking has a solemnising effect in a general way, but eleven successive handshakes, under even the most depressing circumstances, become comic.

I was waiting for my turn, twelfth and last, when Hugh said:

"You might walk down the road with me, Eunice, a little way."

Now three things in this remark struck me as being remarkable. First, his wanting my company, we being by no means such close intimates; second, his addressing me as Eunice, a thing he had never done hitherto; and, third, the implied idea that old things were all over, that he was going from us for ever, and that this special fact involved special consequences.

"Oh, if you like," I said gravely, and went out with him, bareheaded as I was.

The time of primroses was over, but in shady places the hyacinth hung its head, and the wood-sorrel waved its delicate bells.

In the little wood below the manse a small stream was trickling, making a tiny sound of music as it went, and overhead a lark was singing as it soared upward into the blue distance.

"Is it not a pity that a Sabbath walk is un-Presbyterian?" I said, finding the silence between us irksome. "On a day like this I should like to walk on and on, never turning back, and not thinking anything, but just feeling the bleating of the sheep, and the growing of the grass, and the whisper of the wind across the fields."

"On a day like this I feel as if all things were possible," he said.

"I am sure I hope all good things may be possible," I answer vaguely.

"But I want so much," he goes on with a slight catching of the breath. "I want a great work to do, and skill to do it

with. I want power and happiness, and—you."

"Me!" I echo stupidly.

"Yes, you. Don't you know I love you? Haven't you known it for years and years—oh, Eunice!"

I look up at him with a little petulant scorn and indignation. Of course I expected love to come to me some time, but not such love as this—love that would brighten things and better them, and make life easy and pleasant.

As to Hugh Forrester, with his shabby coat and gloveless hands—Hugh Forrester, a mere bank-clerk, dreaming of scholarship as we dream of heaven, his love was a degradation.

"I haven't known anything of the sort, and if I had I should have been very angry," I answer wrathfully. "You to love me, indeed!" drawing myself up with ludicrous importance. "Oh, believe me, I have quite other plans in view than marrying—so! If I ever do marry—and perhaps I never shall—it will be somebody—well, somebody quite different," I conclude lamely.

"This is all new to you, you have never thought about me—how could you?" he goes on with wistful patience. "But, Eunice, I love you, have loved you always; whatever I may do or be will be owing to you somehow, and I want you to think, if I had succeeded, if I were a marked man in a small circle, and if I came to you then and offered you myself and anything I had attained, would you care for me?"

"What is the good of talking like a goose?" I asked with infinite contempt. "Do something before you begin to dream of what you may do. But as to caring for you, that is entirely another matter. Fancy looking ten years ahead—why, you would be over thirty then!" breaking into a derisive laugh.

"Yes, it is a long time, and perhaps I have been wrong to speak; but it seemed as if I could not go away without saying something to you of all I feel. And it is hopeless, you say?"

"Quite hopeless."

I shook hands with him decorously, with a little pride that he was so pale (I think there is nothing equal to the cruelty of ignorance and youth), and then I walked away from him, till I turned the corner that shut me from his sight, after which I started to run, and hurried back to the house as quickly as my narrow gown and country-made boots would permit me.

CHAPTER II.

"EUNICE, come here." Uncle opened the door of our big, chill, rarely-occupied drawing-room, which, with its faded carpet, and stiff ornaments, and quaint needlework, was the one piece of reserved gentility that the house boasted.

It was May Eve, the May of a year succeeding that on which Hugh Forrester had left us, and twilight was melting into night, but the country-side was ablaze for all that, with the fitful flame of gorse, ignited by the country lads in ignorant pursuance of some far-off Druidic rite. From hill-top to hill-top flame answered flame, and black figures circled with sounds of laughter in the yellow light, while the sickle of the young moon bent its silver bow above the scene.

I had been out on the ascent behind the manse alone, watching the lights rise here and there, and grow to columns of flame, and then die into darkness. I liked to be alone with Nature at night when I could; the far-off gleam of the tremulous stars, the timid sounds that came softly through the distance, soothed me like perfect music. But it was only on May Eve that solitary nocturnal ramblings were permissible, the good spirits being afoot that night for the guarding of unprotected maids. In the darkness of my descent the little servant from the manse had darted past me, only turning to nod a smiling good-night. Speech was impossible to her then, because she held hugged to her heart the little root of "yarrow" which "before that time the morrow," if she observed the conditions of the spell religiously, and forbore to utter a sound, would tell her who her true love should be.

Poor, silly little Janet! I looked after her with faint contempt. On such a night how could she practise incantations or believe in lovers?

"Eunice, come here."

With my hat in my hand, and my shawl trailing from my arm, I entered the drawing-room, and saw, seated at the centre-table, in the unusual light of a pair of wax-candles, a tall, slim man with greyish hair, a long nose slightly bent to one side, and a pair of keen eyes.

"Eunice, this is your uncle Claude."

The arm holding my shawl dropped suddenly.

"Your uncle Claude Duchesney, your mother's brother," Uncle James continued explanatorily.

The stranger did not rise to greet me, and he made no affectionate movement towards me; he only sat looking me over in his sharp, appraising way.

"You never heard of him?" Uncle James went on, "because your mother made a *mésalliance*, and offended her friends. But the Duchesneys are great people. This gentleman is an Indian civil servant, home now for two years' leave—coming to visit you has been one of his earliest acts after his arrival."

I try to answer something, but the words stick in my throat. All at once I realise that I am a great, gawky, country girl, dull, and ignorant, and that the gentleman in front of me thinks so.

"I came to see if anything could be done," the stranger says in his clear, cold voice. "I don't believe in endless animosities; I wanted to see Helen's children, and find out what possibilities were in them. Now that I have seen you both," he indicated with a slight wave of his hand Nellie sitting silently in the background, "I think the best thing would be a little education."

"I should like to go to school, only that I am so old. I know nothing," I broke in bluntly.

Uncle James's face fell.

"It is well you feel that; that is a step in the right direction." The stranger stuck the eyeglass, which hitherto he had been swinging, into his eye, and stared at me. "Well, you shall go to school if you wish it, and afterwards, if proper clothing makes you ladylike and pretty, I shall take you both to India."

Then for the first time the meaning of his proposal dawned on me.

"I could not leave uncle, and the manse, and the children," I said with a start. "I love them all. Oh, I could not give them up!"

"As long as you reside in this country you could come here at intervals, of course," Uncle Claude said slowly, "but afterwards—well, India is far off, and your life there would likely unfit you for the manse."

"Mr. Duchesney wishes to take you all to himself, to sever you from old friends, and teach you to despise them, and he has been good enough to offer to pay me for your maintenance hitherto."

Uncle James's lip quivers as he speaks, but his head is held erect with dignity. I go over to him involuntarily, and put my arm about his neck.

"I apologise if I have offended," Uncle

Claude murmurs, with a thin veil of scorn over his courtesy. "Many men would not have resented a proposal made in all good faith. These are my sister's children, and I have no doubt they were often a trouble and expense to you."

"They are my brother's daughters too," Uncle James answers, trembling a little. "Anything in my power was done for them gladly, out of pure love for them and their father. You can provide for them now; if they choose to go with you, I am willing."

"But I do not choose," I answer with a sob. "I want no friend but you, no home but the manse, and if I am ignorant and stupid, what does it matter?" brushing away a tear as I spoke.

"You must not form such a grave decision in a moment," Uncle James says, his hand tightening on mine. "This is a question affecting your whole future, you must think it well over. Mr. Duchesney will give you time."

"I shall give you a week." Uncle Claude rises as he speaks. "I go back to town to-night; this day week I shall come for your answer."

He gives uncle his finger-tips, extends the same to me, which I feign, with clumsy discourtesy, not to see, pats Nellie on the cheek, and goes away, stepping jauntily.

"Oh, Eunice, isn't it like a book?"

Nellie has repressed her raptures till she is alone with me, but in the stillness of the room which we share with the sleeping three-year-old baby, her delight breaks forth.

"What is there like a book in that icicle offering us what we don't mean to take?" I ask gruffly.

"Not take it? That is good. I assure you I shall take it with all my heart. Why, he'll send us to school in London, perhaps, and take us to India, and we might marry rajahs and become begums—who knows? And think of the fine clothes, and the company, and everything! Oh, Eunice, I'm only afraid of waking up and finding it a dream."

"You are an empty, heartless little thing," I say contemptuously, and fall to brushing my hair furiously.

"No more heartless than you are," Nellie answers severely. "You think it a fine thing to stop at home with Uncle James, who can't afford to keep us. I don't. I think the sensible and kind thing is to take ourselves off his hands when we

have a chance, and afterwards, when we are rich and prosperous, do something to repay him for all his trouble."

Nellie coils herself up in bed with a strong conviction of her own wisdom, and I put out the candle and cry myself to sleep in the darkness.

Of course we went with Uncle Claude. Common-sense demanded that course, which aunt urged, and which uncle only faintly negatived, and which our intended benefactor had taken for granted from the beginning. But I went away with the feeling that my affections twined round every stick and stone about the manse, and that my upheaval had killed me.

"I shall come back—I shall come back!" I sobbed, leaning from the window of the railway-carriage, and holding Uncle James's hand, even after the huge machine was in motion; "and if I am ever able to be of any use in the world, ever able to be anything but a burden on you, I shall come to live with you, and we shall never part."

"God bless you, Eunice!" he whispered huskily.

Those were the last words I ever heard from his lips. It was early summer then; before Christmas came round, the flat tombstone to the east of the church had been moved to make way for all that was mortal of the purest saint I ever knew, and the manse was left vacant for strangers.

It was a fashionable seminary we went to, where, owing to my age, we were made parlour-boarders, who paid extra, and we were allowed no holidays, the educational process being continued during the vacations, and after Uncle James's death I did not care.

Aunt had taken a cottage about ten miles from her old home, and except for her one irreparable loss, she was no worse off than she had been. The Church yielded her the annuity allowed to the widows of ministers, and an insurance company paid her a small sum, amassed Heaven knew by what efforts and ingenuity, and Uncle Claude most kindly added an income that, with their simple tastes and few requirements, removed all dread from the future. As to our days, their sum was narrowed down to acquiring a smattering of many things, and making the best of ourselves on Uncle Claude's periodical visits. I think he was pleased with our progress, for he bought us fine things unlimitedly, and introduced us, by-

and-by, to his friends, and seemed pleased to take us, pranked out magnificently, to stalls at the play. But for all that we did not go to India, somewhat to Nellie's indignation, and the simple reason was that uncle got married, and ceased to want us. He was over forty, and he had had a disappointment years before, so that he had decided to keep his life empty for ever, but he changed his mind somehow when the occasion came, and the end of it all was that he brought a pretty, soft, motherly girl to the college one day, and introduced her to us as our future aunt. I think I was cordial enough, for I was grateful to uncle, and glad that he should be happy, but my warmth was nothing by the side of Nellie's tropic fervour. She literally gushed over the pair, and when they had left cried her eyes out for spite.

For my part, I could not say I was deeply grieved; the prospect of Eastern life had never allured me much, and if uncle abandoned us now it was fortunate that we could do something for ourselves.

But uncle had no thought of abandoning us. He came next day, and unfolded his plans to us, with the shy constraint of an elderly bachelor about to marry. Charlotte, his future bride, was pleased with us both, and would willingly take us to India, if we cared to go, and chaperon us there, and do her best for us. Failing that, he would make arrangements for us at home, and settle a trim little income on us, for our sole use and pleasure.

Either alternative was pleasant enough: of course we should have enjoyed tropic luxury and importance; but, on the other hand, entire and moneyed independence at home was not without its charm. How we might have decided is still doubtful, had not one of my uncle's friends unexpectedly proposed to my pretty little sister, and, to my utter amazement, found her entirely willing.

He was elderly, he was yellow, he had a bad liver, and a bad temper to boot; but he had an estate in Surrey, and a town house, and a stud of horses, and a box at the Opera, and so my sweet seventeen-year-old little sister discovered that she could love him.

CHAPTER III.

"MAY I speak with you a little, Nellie?"

"Yes, certainly, by-and-by."

My sister answers absently, for she is busy filling up invitation-cards to one of her pleasant receptions.

She looks a very bright, pretty, contented matron as she sits in her fresh morning-gown by the writing-table. A little timepiece is ticking busily opposite her, and she glances at it now and again, for Nellie loves to think that her hours are valuable, and that she apportions them with business-like precision.

"There are about fifty more to address." She looks up at me doubtfully as she speaks. "I should ask you to help me, but you would be sure to make mistakes."

"Of course I should. I'd mix up the envelopes, and ask bachelors to bring their families, and benedicts to come without their wives," I admit despondently.

Nellie goes on writing, and I look at her with a little envy, added to my never-failing sense of wonder. How is it that Nellie is so perfectly happy? Have her deserts been greater or her demands in life fewer than those of other people? And shall I ever by any change of circumstances attain to like contentment?

"There now, that is done." Nelly stamps her letters with a sigh of relief, rings for the footman to take them away, and then turns to me.

"I think your party will be very pleasant," I say with polite evasion.

"There is no knowing before the replies are in; but I don't suppose you have waited half an hour to tell me that."

"No, not exactly." I feel that I am blushing, as her bright eyes scrutinise me, and now that a decisive moment in my life has come, I shrink from it.

"Then what is it?"

"I have been thinking of leaving Prince's Gate," I say with a quiver in my voice.

Nellie looks at me blankly.

"You and Mr. Baddington have been very kind to me—far too kind," I go on tremulously; "but all the same I have never been happy here. Fashionable life does not suit me; your friends don't care for me; and so I want to go away."

"To go where?"

"Where I shall be needed. I have been here six years, and, with all gratitude to you, I must say the years have been wasted. I am no better, or wiser—indeed, far less so than I was at the manse."

"And whose fault is that?" Nellie asks, with an accent of offence. "I have taken you everywhere, you have met the very nicest people, and you might have been settled in life times and again, had you cared."

"But I did not care, and I think my soul is perishing of the emptiness of your world." The appeal in my voice is pitiful, but it only angers Nellie. She draws herself up stiffly and looks at me. "It is all my own fault," I go on regretfully. "Rich people, and grand people, and fashionable people are as good as others, perhaps better, but I can't understand or reach them; and so I want to get away to other conditions and other surroundings."

"And where will you seek your Utopia?"

"I shall go to Aunt Letty."

Nellie looks at me incredulously.

"To Aunt Letty, with her eight children, and her common house in a common street! Very well, Eunice, if you wish that, I need not try to reason with you."

She glances round at all the graceful appointments of her tasteful room, and shrugs her shoulders slightly. My bad taste is incomprehensible.

"I am leaving the better for the worse, I know;" there is a little break in my voice as I speak; "but odd people are happier in odd surroundings, and I always wanted to do something, to be of use."

"And how do you mean to benefit Aunt Letty?"

"I am not very rich, but still I can be of service among poorer people. There are children to educate, and I have a little money."

"But so little—far less than I spend on my dress."

"Yes, but the needs there will be so different; and do you not think that we grow through sacrifice?"

Nellie sets this question aside as irrelevant. "Then you have made up your mind?" she says.

"Yes, but I have not arranged anything. I am to visit aunt next week, you know, and then we shall form our plans."

"But are you sure she will want you?"

I look at Nellie with a tremulous smile.

"No, I am not sure of anything; I know I am a woman apart, as helpless as some unshelled soft creature, and as perverse as though I were of adamant. But that is my misfortune, Nellie, and Uncle James used to love me. I have been thinking his children would love me too."

"I should not reckon on it," Nellie says with terse matter-of-factness. "Remember how long you have been away from them, and all the diversity in your lives."

"I shall make allowances; there is no getting on unless you make allowances," I

say. "But, in any case, I shall not return permanently to Prince's Gate."

"My dear Eunice, this is quite a pleasure—quite a pleasure, indeed!" My aunt has come out to the cab-door, and has embraced me in the slack way peculiar to lymphatic people; and after my long and toilsome journey I stand on the doorstep with a troubled consciousness of surprise and dismay. I had not expected much, but I certainly had looked forward to some one meeting me at the station of this unknown town; and to some semblance of rejoicing being made at my approach. But I have arrived unwelcomed, have jogged alone through the deadlively thoroughfare, and now aunt, in the limpest of dresses and dingiest of caps, is greeting me, without any circle of eager young faces making a background behind her.

"You are all well, I hope?" I repress a little chill determinedly.

"Quite well, thank you, Eunice dear. Indeed, we never have had any complaints to make regarding health since you saw us."

"Then where are the young people; did they not know I was coming?"

"Oh, of course they knew. Indeed, I don't know where they are. I think Teddy and Dick are here," opening the parlour-door as she speaks.

Two clumsy boys rise reluctantly from the hair-cloth sofa as we enter, and extend me an unwilling hand.

"Dick was the baby when we parted."

Not to be daunted in my friendliness, I draw them towards me, and turn their reluctant faces to the light.

"They are not like uncle," I say disappointedly.

"No; the boys take after my side of the house."

"And the girls?"

"I don't know about Letty; she is the third, you remember; but Edith and Lily are Kinnairds, and pretty girls, though I say it. Edith used to be quite a father's daughter—all for books and fine thoughts. I hardly knew what to make of her once, but she is engaged now."

"And that will cure her of the fine thoughts," I say with sorrowful irony.

"Well, yes; she is growing useful now, quite a housekeeper, for practice, you know."

"And whom is she to marry?"

"A young man from the bank, near our

old home; you remember the bank Hugh Forrester belonged to?"

"Yes." I release my two unwilling captives, whom I have been holding hitherto. "Have you heard anything of Hugh lately?"

"I have heard that he is quite a great man—a specialist, he calls himself. He has lived abroad for years studying, and I have heard people say that he will make his mark."

"You have not seen him since—since he went away?"

"No, there is nothing to bring anyone back here."

"Do you know if he is married?"

"I never heard, but most likely he is. I hope he is happy anyway. He was always a favourite of mine."

Aunt goes out to fetch in the brown earthenware teapot for afternoon-tea, and we help ourselves amicably, and then I ask for my remaining cousins.

"Sam and David are at a cricket-match, and Edith took Letty with her when she went out shopping a little while ago. Lily is having her music-lesson now, she has it at the same hour every day, otherwise I think she would have been to meet you."

"Is Lily fond of music?"

"Pretty well, but she is training for a governess; not that I like it much, but what can you do when a girl is self-willed?"

"Oh, nothing, and she is quite right," I answer vaguely. And then the door opens and a tall girl comes in with a roll of music under her arm.

"It's my cousin Eunice, I am sure." She draws her cotton gloves off as she speaks, and then comes up and kisses me warmly. "It was horrid that no one met you, but the boys would not go, and I could not. You must have thought very badly of us."

"Oh no, not at all, I knew it was only a mischance." And then I kiss her with all my heart in the caress. "You are uncle's beautiful, gracious child anyhow, be the others what they may," I say to myself.

"What do you think of her, Edith?" I am in my own room many hours later when this question reaches me with startling directness through the closed door, which a wardrobe hides, but by no means renders sound-proof.

"She has uncommonly good clothes."

"I think it was very cool of her to take all that big bedroom to herself, just as a matter of course. She might have had me

to sleep with her quite well," pursues the aggrieved Letty. "Fancy turning Lily out to sleep with mamma, and never caring a bit."

"Oh, how was she to know we had no spare bedroom? Don't be such a goose, Letty."

"I wonder how long she is going to stay. Not very long, I hope."

"I hope not too. It would be a bore having her always in the drawing-room when Tom is here."

"She might have brought us some presents, might she not? I think she is shabby."

"Oh, Letty, do not shout so. If she should hear us!"

"I wonder how old she is!"

"Pretty old, I should say. Sam is older than I am, and her married sister is ever so much older than Sam, and she is older still."

"Then I suppose she is an old maid?"

"Yes, I suppose so; but, dressed as she is, age does not matter so very much."

The wardrobe door creaks a little as I close it, for I had been putting away my travelling things when the colloquy commenced, and now I turn away with a little heart-sickness, having heard as many unpalatable things as generally fall to the lot of eavesdroppers. Uncle's children had not any tender feelings towards me; therefore, life amongst them would not be the haven I had dreamed of.

I lay awake far into the night, thinking sadly of many things. What was there about me that rendered me a pariah? Why did no one ever tend towards me with the form of love that I desired?

Small sorrows loom very largely when one is lying awake meditating, and listening to the clock slowly chiming hour after hour. I would have sold my future happiness for the certainty of a very small good as I lay pondering during that darkest period that precedes the dawn. But next morning, when Lily's bright, refined face looked in at the door, to ask me how I had rested, and if I cared to get up, a sudden resolve leaped into being.

"Come here," I said impulsively. "I want to know if you would care to let me educate you. We shall go abroad together, and you shall have the best masters money can procure. I am rich and independent, and nobody needs me or cares for me. There, don't answer now. Talk it over with your mother, and let me know at your leisure how you decide."

CHAPTER IV.

FRAULEIN WEITLING'S boarding establishment, Number Ten, Gräfin Platz, Berlin, was eminently respectable, for a variety of reasons. It was on the ground-floor, when ordinary establishments of a like nature were three, four, five storeys high; it was in a retired locality, remote from noisy thoroughfares and the vulgar traffic due to trade; the Rathhaus was only a few doors off, and the Dom Kirche over the way. Further, its inmates were all of the gentler sex, while less genteel establishments actually harboured men.

Fräulein Weitling could accommodate eight ladies with board and residence, and eight invariably sheltered beneath her hospitable roof, for what so needful to unprotected femininity as an odour of respectability in its surroundings?

It was a compliment to her eight boarders that Fräulein Weitling considered them as respectable as her establishment, but perhaps her estimate awarded them only bare justice, for they were all modestly moneyed, and that is respectable; they paid their bills with alacrity, and that is respectable; they attended church regularly, and that is respectable. Finally, they were all spinsters. Need further proof of their respectability be adduced?

Fräulein Weitling's attractive little circular promised her boarders cheerful intellectual society in her comfortable home, and they found it—among themselves, for they assembled daily in a common parlour, took their refectations at a common table, and discussed gossip, politics, or religion, quite openly, and sparred among themselves mildly or fiercely according to temperament and the latest atmospheric influence. But each rode her particular hobby and aired her particular theory, and if that does not render society cheerful, what does?

They lived together very contentedly, these well-to-do women who were growing old. No doubt each life had its own history of desire and disappointment, of ambition and despair; but that was all ended now, and the future would be uneventful like the present. But what did that matter when rooms were comfortable and meals regular, and when merry music could be heard at any time for a groschen or two? The boarders, who had learned what living signified, took things as they came, and never thought of grieving.

Lily and I were a perpetual mild interest

at Number Ten, Gräfin Platz. We were with the boarders, but not of them. We were foreigners, we were only temporary residents, and we were young. Young!—save the mark, with ten good years yawning drearily between us. But in the eyes of fifty and sixty no doubt nine-and-twenty seems a period of gay juvenility.

It was three years since I had left England with Lily Kinnaird, and my life with Fräulein Weitling had been very happy. My peculiarities were left in peace, simply because no one noticed them, and Lily loved me, and her progress made life interesting. Her evenings and the night were always spent with me; her days were devoted to classes in a great school Unter den Linden. Lily was studying for the state diploma. When she had attained that we should return to our own country, ready for any fortune.

Lily always spoke of teaching, and I did not discourage her, for a plan of life relieves the days of that vague uncertainty which often renders existence so burdensome to women. But of course I had my own private opinion. It was not likely she would grow old in teaching, since there were men with eyes in the world. Lily would marry, as was right and fitting. Since I had lived in Number Ten, Gräfin Platz, celibacy had ceased to seem a necessity, and had assumed the aspect of a penalty entailed on perverse natures. Lily would marry, of course; but, meantime, it would do her no harm to be ready to struggle for elbow-room among the world's working people.

"Cousin Eunice, you have spoiled Lily."

I had been lingering over my breakfast in the dingy little apartment of the Kinnaird household, termed by courtesy the dining-room, in a mood of new and rare contentment that had come to me in recent days, when my brisk and impertinent little cousin, the Letty of earlier memories, broke in on my self-gratulation abruptly.

"Spoiled Lily! My dear child, what do you mean?"

"You have made her far too grand for us, and yet she is not any better than I can see. She is idle, and she turns up her nose at people who know less than she does, and she won't eat the food that is good enough for mother and me, and when our friends—excellent people whom she has known all her life—call to see her, she is as languid and grand as if their visit could not possibly be meant for her."

"Oh, my dear Letty, I am sure you are quite mistaken; I am sure——" But I stop confusedly, for Lily's real and conscious superiority to her surroundings has made itself patent even to my not too acute perceptions.

"You are sure that what I say is right, and so it is, and mother has noticed it too, though she would not speak out. But I can't hold my tongue about what I feel, and so I just want to know what you think about Lily."

"I think she is a dear and lovely girl."

"Oh, that is all very fine; so was Edith, so am I, too, for the matter of that; but I don't think being lovely is a career, and I should like to find out what we are to do with Lily, and her airs, and her education, and her dresses. She is far above us, and she isn't going to teach now, for when I asked her about it, she told me not to bother."

"Well, I do think, Letty, it was very unkind of you to ask her such a question, as though you wanted her out of the house," I answer indignantly. "She is your sister, and a great credit to you, and I would request you not to sit in judgment on her, but just leave her in my hands."

"I dare say you will keep her; but is it a nice thing for a girl to be in that position because she is lazy? You undertook to educate her, and I suppose you consider that ended now; and yet what can she do? She can't make her own dresses; she does not know how anything is cooked; and as to teaching, you only think she can do it, for you don't know."

There was a certain amount of truth in this, which, however, I was not disposed to admit, so I looked at my practical, blunt-featured, prettily-tinted little cousin severely, and answered loftily and evasively that she did not know what she was talking about.

Letty nodded her head with thorough comprehension of me and my subterfuges, shut her firm little mouth, like one who has said her say, and will leave it to carry conviction of itself, asked me politely if I had finished breakfast, and then rang for the maid-of-all-work to clear away the things.

It was more than three months since the April morning when Lily and I had left Berlin. Then my life had seemed to me all cut and dried and ended, while a long vista of fair possibilities fronted her. Now, after a gay season

under Nellie's roof, Lily had learned to think any life she might live certain to be dull and commonplace—while I? Well, Heaven be praised! I was not so old or ugly as I might have been.

Perhaps it had been thoughtless to introduce Lily into a rich household, and show her how full and complete existence might be rendered; to expose her to all Nellie's habitual matchmaking; to let her be fêted and caressed for three months, and then to plunge her suddenly into her own homely household, and say, "Your life is here." But it was only for a time, though she did not know that, nor could I tell it to anyone yet, but by-and-by she would have with me as perfect a life as I could offer her.

My story was not ended yet; no doubt I had known that deep down in my heart always; no doubt I had remained young, waiting for the sequel. I wonder had I loved him unconfessed from the hour he said "Farewell," or did my love leap into existence when I saw him in the strength of his matured manhood—in the pride of his achieved ambition? I think I loved him always; I think the thought of his purposeful life made me weary and impatient of other men.

He was one of Nellie's guests; he was the great oculist of whom all England had heard, and he was Hugh Forrester, the man who had tried to woo me beneath the shadow of the pines.

He had never forgotten me; he came daily to Prince's Gate after he found me there, and thenceforward my laggard life was set to music. I never had a doubt of the nature of his feelings towards me. He was not a man to change, and if he had grown indifferent, why should he make occasions in his busy life to find us out and talk to us of old times? And why should he have given me the history of all his struggles, unless he still remembered that he had called me the motive power of all his future? Oh, the blooming time of my heart had been late in coming, but I was proud of the perfection of the tardy blossom I could offer him.

"I shall go and see you in the north soon," he had said as he saw us off from Euston. He brought us each flowers at parting, and the fragrance of my crimson roses was like a message to me through the long dusty journey.

Lily found a tuft of blue forget-me-nots nestling at the very heart of hers, and picked it out and fastened it at her throat

with girlish coquetry. She liked him, as I was sure all young girls would, and he and she would be rare friends by-and-by.

Things had altered a good deal with aunt since we parted—altered and improved. Edith was married and off her hands, two of the boys were self-supporting, and more, bringing their mite periodically to the lean domestic purse, while Letty, the matter-of-fact Letty, undertook the household management, and really wrought wonders. There was a certain method in all the arrangements now, and the poor old house, if shabby, was scrupulously bright and tidy.

To me life here was far more interesting than in Nellie's magnificent establishment. The interests were more human, the heart-needs fewer, and the efforts farther-reaching and more varied.

"Perhaps I shall come to live with you by-and-by," I said once to aunt tentatively.

"Oh, you will marry!" She looked at me inquisitively, smiling a little.

"Women of thirty don't often marry," I said, blushing hotly.

"No, and maybe it is better for them. There is sorrow in life either way," sighing.

But I could not think so. I was like an untried girl in my passionate acceptance of this one thing.

He was coming north for me, to tell me he loved me still, and to put right the blunder I had made twelve years ago. He had said so, and I was very patient. Having waited so long I could wait still, but the days dragged a little, though I sang about the house, and wore fresh flowers always, and took a woman's pleasure in being fair. Hitherto it had not mattered, but since he cared——

Oh, how much I should have to tell him, and how much to ask! And how much he would have to tell me of the labours of his long toilsome years! What perfect confidence there would be between us, what thorough comprehension! Oh, these late loves are best! They may have missed the freshness of spring, but they also escape its risks, its drenching showers, its sudden frosts, and all the changes that sometimes kill.

I had been thinking all this as I walked down the dull little street that led to Lavender Terrace. Sometimes the limits of the dingy rooms were too narrow to contain me and my happiness, and then I went out and walked away towards the

sunset, with the triumphant step of a conqueror.

"Mr. Forrester is here, Cousin Eunice."

Letty, in a trim little apron and trim little shoes, had opened the door herself, and now stood inside the hall looking at me.

"Is he?"

How glad I was that I stood with my back to the light, and that she could not read my changing face.

"Yes, he has been here an hour. Lily received him, as mamma was not dressed, but now she is with him too."

For an instant I was tempted to go to him there and then; but I knew I was too tremulous, too exultant, and the others would notice that. So I went upstairs instead, and put aside my outdoor things, and made myself as beautiful as I knew how, and then stood before the mirror smiling dreamily. Oh, that I could meet him alone, if that were possible!

And even as I so thought a light step came flying along the corridor, the door was burst open, and Lily stood on the threshold.

"Oh, Eunice, he has come!"

"I know it, my darling."

"And, Eunice—oh, Eunice, he loves me!"

I have a kind of idea that I sat down here, and that she came to me and knelt beside me, and hid her face on my shoulder.

"I would not let myself think it," she went on; "but all the time I hoped it might be possible. Do you know what it is to hope for a thing with all your soul, and to feel it for ever beyond your reach?"

"Yes, I know."

"And at times I have been so jealous—jealous of you, my own Eunice, who have given me all the poor powers I possess. But he says it is years since he thought of you. Oh, Eunice, you will forgive me for asking. He says you were the love of his boyhood, but he was nothing to you, and so he strove to forget you."

"He was very wise."

"But you were the very root of his ambition years ago, he says, and any triumph he has ever achieved traces its source to you."

"You and he have been talking foolishly."

"We had so much to say, it will take years before we are through it all. It seemed we had only said a few things when mamma came in, and then I fled off to tell you."

"It was very good of you."

"Oh no; but for you I should never have been fit to be his wife; but for you, in all probability I should never have seen him. You have made us both what we are, and given us to each other."

"I always wanted to be a little Providence to uncle's children," I said with a dreary laugh.

"You are not vexed, are you?" striving to see my face in the darkness.

"Certainly not."

"And you will like Hugh—you will be a friend to both of us. You don't know how he esteems and likes you."

"I am very fortunate in that."

"And you will live with us, won't you? You would be happier than with Nellie."

"Don't you think it is too soon to talk of these things?"

"Oh no; for he is asking mamma to give me to him now. He says his life is half over, and he has no time to waste."

"That is true; he is older than I am."

"But he does not look it, Eunice."

So my poor little delusion of youthfulness went down with all the rest.

Hugh and Lily were married a week ago, and I go back to Fräulein Weitling's, as permanent resident, to-morrow.

A LITTLE AVERSION.

CHAPTER I.

It was a morning in early spring, yet it might well have been mid-winter. Snow lay thickly everywhere. Town and country fared alike, with only this difference, that the pure, unsullied white of the stretching fields and hedgerows of the latter was in the former represented by dingy house-tops and chocolate-coloured streets. The razor-like east wind that swept our tight little island from coast to coast was, it may be, a trifle keener as it came swooping round street-corners, than in the more open country; but that was about all.

On that same March morning, and at one and the self-same hour, two people stood looking out, safe sheltered, upon the wintry scene. They were a young man and a young woman. Both were good-looking, well-made, and, one would have added, happy. But a glance at either face was sufficient to dispel that illusion. Moodiness,

discontent, anger, were as plainly written upon the one face as the other. But with all this the wintry weather that reigned without had nothing to do. I doubt if either so much as noticed it. Shall I tell you what it really was? Well, then, it was this. With the young girl it was the thought of the young man; with the young man it was the thought of the young girl. Yet they stood this morning separated by scores of miles, and had been separated by thousands; had never so much as met or looked on one another's faces. But the time had come when they had got to meet, to look on one another's faces, to know each other, and, what is more, to try not to hate one another. So, for this, and all that it entails, moody faces, mutual frowns, hearts in hot rebellion.

But there is more to be learnt. Let us take the young man first.

The window at which he stands, idly drumming on the pane, is one of two in a dismal room in a dismal hotel in a still more dismal street leading down from the Strand towards the river. Now and then he stops his tuneless tattoo to take his watch from his waistcoat-pocket, evidently, as he also listens to every footstep on the stairs, in expectation of a visitor. But the footsteps come and go, and have nothing to do with him. Presently, however, there are footsteps which do not pass on, but stop there, and a hand is on the panel.

"Come in!" he says sharply, and a dingy waiter, entering, holds out a dingy hand, in which there is a card, and says:

"Gent to see you, sir."

There is no need of the card to tell the young man who his visitor is. W. J. Lincoln, solicitor, Bowerdale, Yorkshire, is the only man who could possibly want to see him, Anthony Norris, of Shanghai, to-day. Another moment, and his visitor had him by the hand, and was bidding him welcome to England. He was a man considerably past middle-age, plain, almost ugly-looking, yet no one thought him so after the first five minutes of their acquaintance. It was the first friendly face, the first friendly voice, the younger man had met since his landing, and he returned the warm hand-pressure gratefully.

"Well," cried the lawyer, rubbing an obtrusively large nose to warm it, "and how are you? Frozen—eh? Couldn't have come into worse weather if you had come at Christmas."

"Well, yes. I suppose it is rather cold.

I haven't been warm since I landed, now you mention it. But I have had other things to think of, you see."

"Pleasant ones, I hope. They should be, you know—should be."

"Scarcely," said the young man grimly.

"No! You surprise me! A young lady to think about, and a very charming young lady, let me tell you; a fine estate into the bargain too! Dear me, what wouldn't I give to be in your shoes!"

"And I," cried Anthony Norris, "I wish I had never come back at all. I should not have done so, but that my plans for a year's absence were already made when your letter reached me. And what is more, I wish I had never saved the old madman's life at all. I wish with all my heart I had let him drown—there!"

"Dear me, dear me!" cried Mr. Lincoln, rubbing his big nose quite viciously, "this is very sad! Why, you are as bad as my friend, Miss Beatrix, herself."

"Eh!" said young Norris, stopping short.

Mr. Lincoln gave a little cough.

"Yes, she is quite as hot about it as you can be. She has a will of her own, I assure you."

"I hate a woman with a will of her own."

Mr. Lincoln gave another little cough. Anthony looked at him sharply, then laughed for the first time.

"Come, that is better," said the lawyer cheerfully. "And now let us see if we can't get to the bright side of all this. In the first place let us run over the facts of the case—a very peculiar one, I admit. A client of mine in a will—which, by the way, I did not make—leaves his estate, personal property, everything, in fact, of which he dies possessed, in this wise: Firstly, all to go to his natural heiress and granddaughter, provided, that is, she marries a certain young man, an utter stranger to her, who chanced to save his life some five years ago—in Malta, I believe."

Young Norris gave a groan of acquiescence.

"In the event of the young lady declining to carry out this arrangement, both parties are to receive the sum of ten thousand pounds. In the event of the young man declining, the young lady's ten thousand becomes twenty thousand, while the young man receives but five thousand. Should both parties prove refractory, each receives the original ten thousand, and no

more, the remainder of the estate going to certain charities. Stop a bit," the lawyer went on, seeing his companion about to speak; "the terms of the will are these: That you and Miss Thornhill shall spend at least six months of the twelve now before us in one another's society at Braybrooke Court or elsewhere. Furthermore, that the final decision be not made by either party before the expiration of the first six months—though necessarily before the entire twelve be expired."

"Was there ever such a madman?" cried the young man. "Why, if he wanted us to hate one another—to cut one another's throats, he could not have gone more cleverly to work. But I throw the whole affair up—I will have nothing to do with it."

"My dear sir," said Mr. Lincoln quietly, "don't you think that is treating a young lady, and a very charming young lady, as I have said, and one who has certainly as much to complain of as yourself, rather cavalierly? Do you expect me to go back and tell her you decline even to look at her?"

"She would be more grateful, I expect, than even I should be."

"I don't doubt it. Ah, I am not going to flatter you, but later on, when it comes to saying good-bye to the old home—how then? It will be you who will have ousted her, remember. Come, confess she is entitled to some consideration."

Young Norris's dark face flushed a little.

"Don't misjudge me, Mr. Lincoln," he cried. "See how I am placed. If I decline to present myself at Braybrooke Court and to Miss Thornhill, I am an ungracious cur, tender only of my own vanity or self-esteem. If, on the other hand, I agree to do so, the world, and what is more to the point, Miss Thornhill herself, will see in me only a barefaced fortune-hunter, and I had as well—nay, better—have stayed away."

Mr. Lincoln was again rubbing his nose, in perplexity this time. There was no small amount of truth in his young friend's argument, yet he did not mean to be abashed by it.

"The fact is, my dear sir," he said, after a moment's pause, "the whole affair is wrong from beginning to end, and what we have got to do is to make the best we can of it. I say to you what I have already said to Miss Thornhill: give yourselves a chance."

Young Norris could not give in all at once. But at last he spoke, reluctantly enough:

"Well, since it must be——"

"That's right; and now let us be off. You may live to thank your 'old madman' yet."

The younger man shook his head.

"If only I had let him drown!" he muttered.

CHAPTER II.

BUT we have kept the young lady, at all times a somewhat impatient one, waiting long enough. As she stands, eyes flashing, lips pouting, discontent, annoyance, written upon her face, there is no difficulty in recognising in her the object of Mr. Lincoln's Machiavellian policy. She is not companionless. Two ladies, both somewhat beyond middle-age, share with her the warmth and cheerfulness of the morning-room at Braybrooke Court.

The elder of the two, Miss Joanna Duncombe, sister of the late owner of the place, is a tall, thin, spinster lady of a placid and somewhat unmeaning countenance; the other, a plump, comfortable-looking body, with a shrewd, yet kindly face, is Mrs. Lincoln.

"If only," the girl is saying, "I were a sparrow, or a starling, or," as something that looked more like a blue, wind-swept blossom than a bird, came fluttering down on the snow outside, "a tom-tit, I could not be expected to marry a hateful young man from Shanghai. Oh, my grandfather must have been mad when he made that will!"

"No, no, my dear," said Miss Joanna mildly. "I remember the day my poor brother made it, perfectly. We were in London, it was very hot, and he called me a fool. He was never more sensible in his life."

"Well," exclaimed the young lady at the window, turning sharply round, "I was never more sensible in my life, and I tell you this, Aunt Joanna, and you too, Mrs. Lincoln: nothing will induce me to carry out that will. The young man from Shanghai may come here and make the place intolerable for the next six months. I will try to be civil to him, but if he so much as breathes a word of love or marriage, I will leave the Court and him—and Aunt Jo may marry him. And now," she went on, with a sudden change in her voice, "I am going for a ten-mile walk. Perhaps I may come back in a better temper; if I don't, I pity everybody."

And with a laugh and a kiss from her finger-tips to the two ladies by the fire, Miss Beatrix Thornhill disappeared.

When, many hours later, my heroine entered the "little drawing-room" at the Court, dressed for dinner, and looking as distractingly charming as a wilful, high-spirited young lady of more than ordinary personal attractions can look, she found the lawyer and his charge just arrived and in possession of the fire. As he introduced the two young people, Mr. Lincoln glanced with curious, observant eyes, to which a sly twinkle had stolen, from one to the other.

He saw just what he had expected. The young lady, her colour slightly heightened—it might be by her wintry walk—cool, collected, studiously polite; the gentleman flushed, awkward, and angrily anxious to escape.

Mr. Lincoln watched the little scene a moment or two longer, and then took pity on his victim.

"Come," he said, "let me show you to your room. Miss Thornhill will excuse us."

Five minutes later he was back again.

"Well," he cried, rubbing his nose, "and what do you think of our friend from—what's the name of the place?"

"I think," said Miss Thornhill decidedly, "he had better have stayed there."

"Ha, ha!" laughed the lawyer, and he rubbed his nose more vigorously still. "That is exactly what he says, ex—actly. We are getting on famously."

Whatever the nature of Miss Thornhill's slumbers may have been that night, Anthony Norris knew little of either sleep or forgetfulness. He was by nature neither a coward nor a pessimist, and having accepted his position, he told himself there only remained to face it with as much dignity as was possible to him. The mysterious and masculine process known as pulling oneself together may be a thing of moments, may be of hours. In Anthony Norris's case it was certainly the latter.

The cold, grey, March dawn found him but just sinking into sleep and forgetfulness. When Beatrix Thornhill went forward to greet her guest next morning, she looked, or thought she looked, upon another man.

The figure rather below than above the middle height, and to which she had in her own mind taken exception the night before, seemed to have gained in height and dignity. The dark eyes gazed steadily into hers. There was no trace of awkwardness. no sign of being at a disadvantage in

voice or manner. In a word, she found herself met with a coolness and self-possession that equalled her own. Of course she hated him still, and yet she longed to pat him on the shoulder, and cry "Bravo!"

CHAPTER III.

THE town of Bowerdale, in whose principal street Mr. Lincoln's house and office were to be found, was distant some three miles only from Braybrooke, consequently easily to be reached by him when at the Court. On this particular morning the lawyer countermanded the dog-cart, and bore his young hostess off to the library.

"Now," he said, placing her in an easy-chair by the fire and drawing up another for himself, "it is no use deferring things. We have got this young man—the question is, What are we to do with him? He has few connections in England, none to whom he needs at present present himself. We may, therefore, consider that the play is begun. Have you any suggestion to make in his behalf or your own? As soon as the weather is anything like decent, he can find occupation and amusement enough. In the meantime——"

"In the meantime I make him a present of the billiard-room and stables; I will promise never to go near either."

"Well, yes, that might reconcile him," said Mr. Lincoln thoughtfully.

Miss Thornhill's pretty little nose, quivered ever so little; ever so little a pout came to the laughing lips.

"You don't think anything of the kind," she cried.

"Don't I? Well, we shall see. Now, if you were only—but it can't be helped."

"What can't be helped?"

"Why, you see, the fact is this young fellow naturally has his ideal, as, of course, we all of us have." Mr. Lincoln paused to rub his nose; a little flush stole to his young companion's face. "Now, if only you were small, yellow-haired, blue-eyed, and that sort of thing, you know! But there, as I have said, it can't be helped."

"Helped! why, I wouldn't be like that for the world!"

"No, no, of course not; still——"

"I wonder where he is!" the girl interrupted him suddenly, rising and crossing to the nearest window. "I suppose I may as well take him for a walk. Ah, how cold it looks! It won't kill him, will it, after that broiling place of his?"

"I should hardly think so," said the lawyer gravely, opening the door for her.

Five minutes later, Miss Thornhill and her guest were stepping briskly down the straight, snow-covered drive.

"It's a good three miles into Bowerdale, I must tell you," the young lady was saying; "I hope you can walk so far."

"Thank you," said Anthony gravely; "I walk occasionally, I assure you, and," he added with a smile, "work too."

"Do you?" said Miss Thornhill. "I thought in those dreadfully hot places people only slept, and drank things."

Young Norris laughed outright.

"I hope I don't look quite that sort of man."

The girl eyed the well-knit figure at her side, then gave one steady, questioning glance at the keen, sunburnt face.

"No," she said frankly, "I don't think you do."

Anthony raised his hat. Beatrix gave a little rippling laugh.

"Ah, I see—you are very like other people, after all."

"Of course I am. What did you expect me to be like?" he asked quickly.

"I expected you to wear turned-up shoes and a pigtail, and——" She paused.

"And what?" he said, eagerly bending his dark eyes on hers.

"Oh, nothing else in particular. I suppose you do something out there besides work and walk?" she went on somewhat irrelevantly.

"Yes, we play occasionally."

"Dancing, tennis, and so on?"

"Yes, we are even civilised enough for tennis and dancing, when we can get any one to dance with."

"Ah, you have not many ladies—not young ones, I suppose. Tell me about them," said Miss Thornhill with sudden interest. "Are they very nice? Who is the prettiest? What is she like? Tell me all about them."

"Of course they are very nice," her companion answered, laughing. "As to who is the prettiest, I suppose that is a matter of taste."

"But your taste."

"Supposing I have none?"

"Supposing nothing of the kind. Listen: Young lady, name unknown, small, fair, golden-haired, blue-eyed——"

"Stay!" cried Anthony, reddening. "How do you know? Who told you?"

Beatrix only nodded her head mysteriously. At this moment the dog-cart from the Court came whirling past. Mr. Lincoln merely shook his whip at the

young people as he passed, but he was smiling in a very satisfied and contented manner as he did so. Was the smile too well satisfied, too content to please Miss Thornhill? I cannot say; I only know that after this the walk was scarcely such a success. The young lady's previous affability gave place to a decided chilliness under which the young man, naturally, also froze and stiffened. The two drew farther apart with each step. As they neared their destination they had almost the road between them. Conversation necessarily languished. It was in all but silence that Beatrix piloted her companion through the little town. At the Lincolns' door she turned to leave him.

"No, I am not coming in," she said. "Mr. Lincoln will give you some luncheon and a seat in the dog-cart back." She was going to say "home," but checked herself.

"And where shall we find you?" Anthony asked, frigid as herself.

"Please be good enough to say I am gone on to the Turners';" and before he had time to lift his hat, the young man found himself alone on the lawyer's doorstep.

I am afraid Mr. Lincoln scarcely found his guest as bright and companionable as he had expected to do. Miss Thornhill was evidently a tabooed subject, as was also the walk that had promised so well in her company. But I hardly think the astute practitioner was altogether at a loss to account for the unlooked-for turn affairs had evidently taken. He knew his wilful favourite and all her ways by heart, and could make a tolerably correct guess as to what had happened. But never a word spoke he. He only—the silent meal being over—brought out a box of his best cigars and the morning paper, bidding his guest make himself happy, and look out for the dog-cart in a couple of hours' time.

The couple of hours seemed to Anthony more like a couple of days, but the dog-cart, followed by his host, appeared at last. Of course Miss Thornhill's message had been duly given.

The Turners' house—an old-fashioned one standing in the midst of good, old-fashioned gardens—was just outside the town. As Mr. Lincoln drove there he rubbed his nose a good deal with the silver handle of his whip. His eyes, too, were twinkling, as if the frost had got into them. At the big gates the groom jumped down, and was about to open them. Mr. Lincoln put up his hand.

"I think, John," he said slowly, his eyes twinkling more than ever, "you shall just run in and ask if Miss Thornhill is still here."

In less than a minute the man was back again.

"Miss Thornhill left about a quarter of an hour ago, sir. She is walking home, I think."

"Dear me," said the lawyer; "but we shall catch her up."

A touch of the whip and they were rattling off again. Not much to be seen ahead. A cart, a man with a couple of dogs; farther on an old woman with a bundle. For the next quarter of a mile nothing at all, then cart number two, and then, stepping briskly along, a figure, tall, slender, fur-wrapped.

"How well she walks!" said the lawyer in genuine admiration. The young man by his side said nothing.

Presently they had caught her up. Miss Thornhill lifted a laughing face.

"Don't stop, for your life," she cried, and waved her muff at them.

The next moment they had dashed past her. Young Norris expressed no surprise, asked no questions. He drew around him the rug which he had partially thrown off in readiness to descend, than sat silent, looking straight before him for the rest of the drive.

The next day Mr. Lincoln, by Miss Thornhill's request, installed the guest in the library.

"You are to look upon the room as yours," he explained. "You say you have a lot of writing and reading to do; do it here. No one will disturb you—not even our friend and hostess, Miss Beatrix."

"No, I can well believe any spot in which I might chance to be would be quite safe from Miss Thornhill's presence," Anthony replied a little bitterly.

"You mistrust one another too much. If you would only try to think of each other as host and guest, and nothing more."

"Impossible," said Anthony hotly; "the fact is, she sees in me only the cold-blooded wooer of her estate and fortune."

"Humph!" said the lawyer.

"You cannot doubt it."

"She is a woman, therefore to be wooed."

"By me—never!"

"She is a woman——' But I won't quote the rest," said Mr. Lincoln. "So good-morning. I will tell Miss Bee when

she wants you she will know where to find you."

Mr. Lincoln was not quite so light at heart as he professed to be. Mrs. Lincoln, as I need scarcely say, shared his anxieties, and took her part in the difficult task of inducing two people, who were determined to hate, to love one another. Miss Thornhill naturally fell to her lot. She spoke her mind freely. She finessed, with this result: Beatrix listened with politeness to all she had to say, kissed her, laughed at her, and went her own way.

Perhaps it was not really such a very dreadful way, after all, if only the young man had been a little less sensitive. It is true she froze when he was disposed to thaw, remembered when he appeared to have forgotten. But, on the other hand, there were times when she, too, would be off her guard, when even she seemed, for the time, to have forgotten, and something almost like friendship would be established between them. And then would "come a frost, a killing frost," and even Mr. Lincoln would go about despondently, rubbing his nose till it presented a warmth and cheerfulness his heart was far from knowing.

And all this time Anthony Norris had the big library to himself, and should have got through a lot of work, for no one, unless it was Mr. Lincoln, ever came there.

The frost and snow had long departed. April had come with balmy airs, budding leaves, and spring blossoms. Violets flung their sweet scent abroad; primroses, scarcely less fragrant, studded bank and hedgerow.

It was a delicious morning, early in the month. Anthony Norris, a cigarette between his lips, had made the round of stables and hothouses, strolled as far as the lodge-gates, and was back again, busy over letters in the room where no one ever came to disturb him, and where, to tell the truth, a pair of dark brown eyes, now wistful, now laughter-filled, would sometimes haunt him till the loneliness would become all but unendurable. But this April morning something wonderful was to happen. As Anthony sat bending over his writing in one of the windows, a light footstep came down the passage, a girl's voice, softly singing, drew nearer with each step. The young man heard it; his pen ceased to travel over the paper. Voice and footstep stopped. A moment—the door was thrown unhesi-

tatingly open. Still he did not stir. The intruder was now half-way across the room. Then he turned.

"I beg your pardon," said Miss Thornhill with a little start; "I had no idea you were here."

"Or you would not have come," said Anthony, rising.

"Quite so. I did not know what to do with all these primroses and violets, so bethought me of your table. Will you have some?"

"Thank you. Yet," Anthony hesitated, "perhaps it is scarcely worth while."

"Certainly not," said Beatrix hastily, drawing back the flowers.

"I was going to say that I have a letter this morning calling me at once to London, so that unfortunately their sweetness, if not wasted on the desert air, will at least be lost to me. Unless, that is," he added, dropping his voice, "you will be good enough to give me a few of the violets."

"Take as many as you like." And Beatrix once more offered him the basket.

"That would not be the same thing at all," said Anthony, laughing.

"They would at least smell as sweet, I suppose," said Beatrix gravely as she handed him the flowers.

"Scarcely, I think," Anthony answered, carefully arranging the little knot of blue in his coat. "There, I shall not take them out until I return."

"Then I hope you will not be away very long."

"Thank you."

"Oh, I was only thinking how dead the poor things would be!"

"Thank you," said Anthony again.

Miss Thornhill moved towards the window by which her companion had been seated, and looked out.

"And when are we to see you back?"

"Oh, you are only getting rid of me for two or three days, unless——"

"Unless what?"

"Unless you would prefer my remaining away longer, or, indeed, not returning at all."

"I think," replied Beatrix quietly, and with her eyes still fixed on the scene outside, "that you are aware there is no question of preference in the matter for either of us."

Young Norris drew a step nearer.

"Miss Thornhill," he cried, his voice trembling a little, "will you let me say a word on this subject? I have never done so yet; it has been thought better it should

be avoided between us. But I want you to do me the justice to believe that I can scarcely be a more unwelcome, than I am an unwilling, guest. I only ask you for your own sake to put up with my presence until the time comes that shall set us both free. Much, I am aware, you must lose by my most unfortunate but innocent crossing of your path, but anything in my power—anything open to me to do——" He hesitated.

"Short of making me your wife!" laughed Beatrix.

Anthony coloured, but said nothing.

"Let us hope," she went on gaily, "we shall neither of us be reduced to such extremities. Come, give me your hand; I freely forgive you what you certainly could not help. You see I can be generous. The thousands that should have been mine I can let go without a pang. For the old place," the brown eyes moistened, "I confess it is not so easy. Still——"

"Still," said Anthony softly, "it is preferable to the other alternative. And now," he added with a smile, and gathering up his letters, "as we quite understand one another, perhaps we may meet again better friends. Good-bye."

"Good-bye, and au revoir; and, Mr. Norris——"

"Yes?" he said, coming back.

"I am sure Aunt Jo will miss you."

Beatrix stood a moment listening to Anthony Norris's retreating footsteps, then she made her way to a little mirror that hung between two of the long French-windows. She stood looking into it thoughtfully for the space of two or three minutes; then she shook her head at the bright, piquante, wilful face reflected there.

"No," she cried, apostrophising it, "you certainly are not ugly, my dear; it can't be that. Perhaps your temper is too bad. You like your own way, you know," with another nod and a flash of the brown eyes. "Still, if even Braybrooke Court, and goodness knows how much a year, can't make you even tolerable, you must, I am afraid, be what Cousin Charlie calls 'a poor lot.' Dear old Charlie! I shall just sit down and write to him, and say he must come at once if he doesn't want me to die of combined bad temper and the young man from Shanghai."

The impetuous mistress of the Court was not long over her letter. She dashed at it, as indeed she did at most things, not using two words where one would do.

There it was in its envelope, addressed and ready for the post; and then—then somehow Miss Thornhill appeared to find time hang somewhat heavily on her hands. Why, I cannot tell. I only know it was so. But I also know that had you ventured to hint that so it was, she would have contradicted you flatly. It scarcely could be the absence of the departed guest, for in the morning they rarely met. Yet in the afternoon she sent back her horse after ordering it to the door, declared her intention of not going out at all, and was eventually picked up by Mr. Lincoln and the dog-cart just outside Bowerdale.

Aunt Joanna really missed the young man, as her niece had assured him she would do, and loudly, if somewhat incoherently, bewailed him at every turn. But she met with no expression of sympathy, from Beatrix at least.

"Dear me, Aunt Jo," cried the girl as she threw herself into her chair in the drawing-room after dinner; "now I have been thinking what a comfort it was to be to ourselves again. Don't you find it so, Mrs. Lincoln?"

"Certainly, my dear. Not that there is really anything objectionable about Mr. Norris. Of course he has seen very little of society—of ladies, I suppose, nothing at all. Still, as you say——"

"Good gracious! my dear Mrs. Lincoln, what did I say?" cried Beatrix hotly. "I am sure I never said he had lived among savages, as you seem to fancy he has done."

"No, my dear. Well, I dare say you are right."

"Not that it signifies," said Beatrix, fanning herself with a screen.

"Not a bit," assented Mrs. Lincoln.

"We are talking of that poor young Norris," explained Miss Duncombe, as Mr. Lincoln came into the room. "We all miss him dreadfully; though why Bee there should say not, and I'm sure if chopsticks or anything of that sort, perhaps he misses them, you know, and we should have got used to them in time, though how my poor dear brother, who had been nearly all his life at sea, could go and all but drown himself as he did——" The rest of Miss Duncombe's wanderings was lost in the stocking she was knitting.

Mr. Lincoln came towards the fire, rubbing his hands.

"Why, there is my friend Miss Bee actually yawning, and only eight o'clock. Come, Miss Bee, what do you say to a game of chess? You are dying of ennui."

"I am dying," laughed Beatrix, "for some one to quarrel with."

"Good, very good," said the lawyer, administering a gentle rub to his nose.

"I don't see it," said his opponent, between a smile and pout.

"No," said Mr. Lincoln gravely; "and yet 'tis big enough."

CHAPTER IV.

WHEN Charlie Duncombe, obedient to orders, and nothing loth, arrived at the Court, he found himself greeted with such smiles and welcome as did not always fall even to his share.

"Why, Bee," cried the broad-shouldered, fair-bearded young Yorkshireman bluntly, "you must be glad to see me! Is the Chinaman so awfully heavy in hand?"

Bee gave her pretty head a little toss.

"If you mean Mr. Anthony Norris, sir, he is not at all heavy in hand, as you call it. In fact, he is not at hand at all, for he happens to be still in London."

"Then I wish he would keep there."

Beatrix's eyes flashed mischievously; she gave a little yawn.

"If you only knew how dull it is without him!"

Charlie Duncombe's fair face crimsoned ever so little. He drew nearer to where Beatrix was standing.

"Bee," he said wistfully, "you have never got to care for the fellow?"

Then Bee laughed outright.

"Oh, you absurd boy!" she cried, "don't you know we hate one another, and that he is gone to London just to get out of your charming cousin Bee's way?"

"Nonsense!" cried the young man stoutly, "I don't believe anything of the sort. And if it was so, what should he come running back here for, I should like to know?"

"To see Aunt Jo," said Beatrix demurely.

"Nonsense!" cried Charlie again.

"Is it? Very well. Wait and see."

Charlie Duncombe did wait, some fortnight at least, but he certainly did not see. He did not so much as get a glance at "the young man from Shanghai," of whom he knew just as much as the outside world, and nothing more. The "lucky fellow" had saved the old admiral's life, and been remembered accordingly. To make him welcome at the Court under the circumstances was all very right and proper, but the fellow ought to know when to go. and

in Cousin Charlie's opinion the time was come. As for Miss Thornhill's opinion, although he made no secret of his own, there was no arriving at it. She would contradict herself, and him, a dozen times a day. In the meantime there she was, his to ride with, walk with, talk with, and quarrel with, and he tried to be content. Sometimes he would look at his companion and wonder if she was half so much so. She should have been. Each morning at breakfast no one was brighter; no one less interested in Mr. Lincoln's communication from "our friend Norris," and certainly no one smiled more contentedly when the lawyer almost daily announced his deferred return. But a morning came when Mr. Lincoln, gathering up his letters, breakfast over, laid a finger upon his young hostess's arm.

"Give me a minute in the library," he said. "It is only a letter from young Norris," he explained as he closed the library-door behind them. "Nothing very interesting, only the Shanghai people are sending him to Lyons; business for the firm, of course, so we shall not see him back just yet. I am writing this morning; I suppose I may tell him not to hurry? He may as well take a run while he is about it. I dare say he finds us rather quiet folks down here." And the lawyer brushed an imaginary fly from off his nose.

"No doubt," Miss Thornhill assented. "Pray beg him not to hurry."

"By the way, of course he sends polite messages, apologies, and all that sort of thing."

"Oh, of course," said Beatrix, carefully examining one of the pens upon the writing-table.

"But you are thinking of writing yourself?"

"I!" she cried, hastily dropping the pen.

"No! Well, I may give him a message of some kind, I suppose? We must be polite, too, you know."

"Mr. Lincoln," said Beatrix hurriedly, "don't you think there are times when truth is preferable even to politeness?"

Her cheeks burned, her breath came in little gasps. Mr. Lincoln looked at her a moment almost wistfully.

"No, I don't," he said boldly, and, with a wave of his hand, was gone.

That morning Miss Thornhill announced her intention of proceeding, with no further delay than was positively necessary, to London for a few weeks. Aunt Jo was, of

course, to accompany her. Cousin Charlie might see them safely on their journey. On their return he was to hold himself pledged to reappear at the Court—as were also the Lincolns.

"To help with the Chinaman, I suppose," he grumbled, as Beatrix reminded him of his promise the morning of his departure, which was indeed the morning after their arrival in town. He could not resist a parting-shot. But contrary to expectation, it appeared to bring nothing down.

"He appears to take a deal of looking after." Shot number two.

Beatrice looked up.

"Don't you think," she said quietly, "that it is just possible Mr. Norris may be quite capable of looking after himself?"

"I don't doubt it!" he retorted. And then Cousin Charlie told himself he had done it this time. She did not blaze out at him in her old, hot, whimsical way that he knew so well, that, after all, meant so little. Her face was very white, her lips trembled a little, she spoke very quietly, and yet he found himself repeating, "that he had done it this time."

"You don't know what you are talking about," she said, "and I—I may not set you right. What is there about me that I cannot make you understand the man wants none of me nor my possessions? Even if he did not care for another, as he does, I tell you that he would not look at me," she was speaking hotly enough now. A crimson flush dyed cheek and brow; something terribly like tears were in her eyes.

Charlie Duncombe stood aghast. What had he done? He knew nothing, and yet he knew enough—too much.

"Good-bye, Bee," he said at last, not daring to look in her face. "I shall be ready to come to you whenever I am wanted. And," a mist came into the honest blue eyes, "remember, dear, that I have always loved you—always."

He stooped down to the hot, shame-flushed face, kissed it, and was gone.

CHAPTER V.

As the young Yorkshireman turned his back on the big city he detested, and set his honest face towards the moorland breezes that he loved, he told himself he should never be happy again. And so he no doubt believed. Yet by the time the looked-for summons to the Court came, he was, thanks possibly to those same moorland breezes, feeling something of his old

lighthearted self, and was prepared to face even the "young man from Shanghai" with a fair amount of equanimity.

In London, meantime, the season was at its height, and our two country ladies were soon in quite a whirl of gaiety. Some of the old county neighbours heard of their arrival, and Miss Thornhill found herself taken here, there, everywhere. London got hotter and dustier every day. Miss Duncombe began to wonder in a feeble way what it would be like if it got any hotter or any dustier. Budgets of home news came almost daily from Mrs. Lincoln, but there was apparently nothing in their contents to hasten the two ladies' return.

But at length the morning came when, suddenly and without a note of warning, the young mistress of the Court sounded the recall.

"If you have had quite enough of all this, Aunt Jo," she said calmly, "I think we will be off."

And before Aunt Jo was quite clear in her own mind as to whether it was she or her niece who had done all the dining, dancing, and gaiety in general, and had had enough of it in consequence, she found herself once more seated in her own particular easy-chair at the Court, and dropping stitches in her knitting as comfortably as if she had never left it. Before the week was over, everything, indeed, was going on very much as before for everybody. The Lincolns were back; Cousin Charlie was there; the "young man from Shanghai" was looked for daily. Then came a telegram; he would be at the Court that night.

Charlie Duncombe had gone some thirty miles down the road that morning, and would be returning by the same train. Mr. Lincoln agreed to wait in Bowerdale, meet the two young men with the dog-cart, and bring them home. Miss Duncombe left her easy-chair and her knitting, and became a very bee for the way in which she buzzed about the place, trotting backwards and forwards to "poor dear young Norris's" room to see that all was comfortable, until Beatrix suggested her taking up her abode there for the day, as a saving of wear and tear both to herself and the stair-carpet. But the final visit was paid at last, and Aunt Joanna set herself to listen for the wheels of the returning dog-cart. It was, it is true, some half-hour or more before even the train could be looked for at Bowerdale, but Miss Duncombe's movements were not given to be influenced by

trifles. After many false alarms, carriage-wheels at last were really heard upon the gravel, and Aunt Jo rushed to the hall-windows in time to catch a glimpse of a nondescript vehicle disappearing in the direction of the kitchen and stables. Once more disappointed, the poor lady returned to her chair and knitting.

"Well?" questioned Beatrix.

"Butcher or baker, my dear; I really could not see which."

"Ah, here is Briggs," laughed Bee a minute or two later. "He can tell us—butter or baker, or——"

She stopped suddenly.

Briggs, a usually florid-complexioned individual, and not given to the holding of his tongue when an eligible opportunity presented itself for wagging it, stood in the doorway, white-faced, open-mouthed, but, as it seemed, unable, or, for the first time in his life, unwilling to speak.

"What is it, Briggs?" cried the three ladies simultaneously.

For answer, Briggs made his way over to Mrs. Lincoln's chair, and whispered something in her ear.

"Excuse me a minute," she said; "a messenger from Mr. Lincoln," and followed the man from the room.

Briggs, stepping softly, led the way to the servants'-hall, where men and maids were gathered, and where the Bowerdale butcher stood the centre of an eager, questioning, yet awe-struck group.

"Now, Mr. Metcalf, if you please," said Briggs, who had recovered his voice.

The men and maids drew back. Mr. Metcalf, who knew Mrs. Lincoln as well as he knew Mr. Briggs himself, touched an imaginary hat-brim.

"It's Lawyer Lincoln as sent me here, ma'am. Fact is there's been a trifle of a accident some twenty mile or so down the road, and the young gentlemen, Mr. Duncombe and t'other, as he was a goin' to meet with the dawg-cart, won't be in just yet. Mr. Lincoln he was afraid as some one might be running over here with the news, and a scarin' of yew ladies unnecessary; so, you see——"

"Yes, yes, I see," interrupted Mrs. Lincoln, feeling quite scared enough as it was. "What about the accident? Any one killed or hurt? What have you heard?"

"Well, you see, ma'am," said Mr. Metcalf, with a little cough, "they keeps these things so precious dark. They don't know nothing! But I did hear——" and

Mr. Metcalf, who was really beginning to enjoy himself, came to a sudden stop, his eyes fixed on something or somebody visible to him over Mrs. Lincoln's shoulder. Mrs. Lincoln turned, as did the rest, and the mistress of the Court came forward. She was very pale, but perfectly self-possessed.

"Go on, if you please," she said, taking her place at Mrs. Lincoln's side. "You were saying——"

"Well, miss, then, since you will have it," said Mr. Metcalf, as a sort of salve to his conscience, and with an alacrity which he the next moment strove to efface and render void by an extra awfulness of tone and manner; "you see they do say as the train your two gentlemen is a travelling by is just smashed to lucifer-matches, and them as isn't killed outright is knocked about orful. But, lor' bless me, I dare say it ain't more 'an half on it true," there was a faint ring of something like regret in his voice; "and you ladies was to be sure and not go a scarin' of yourselves. And, oh, if you please, Mr. Lincoln's love, and he do hope to bring the young gentlemen back safe and sound in time for dinner. And I think, ladies, that's about all."

"Mrs. Lincoln," said Beatrix, as the two retraced their steps across the hall, "will you tell Aunt Joanna what has happened? Just as much as is necessary, nothing more. I am going into the library. If any one should want me, or you should hear anything," with a little shudder, "you will find me there."

Then the lawyer's wife went back to the room which Miss Duncombe had not had the courage to leave. Mr. Metcalf would scarcely have recognised his story as Mrs. Lincoln told it; but even so, it was quite enough to send the colour from poor Aunt Joanna's face, and set her teeth chattering. So the two sat together, scarcely speaking, waiting for they knew not what.

But they had not long to wait. Before the sweet summer day was very much nearer to its close, the dog-cart was at the door. No one had heard it but Mrs. Lincoln. She cast a glance where her companion sat with trembling hands over her knitting, then stole unnoticed from the room. Mr. Lincoln was already in the hall. He was alone, but one glance at his face was sufficient to reassure her.

"Yes, safe and sound, both of them," he said, in answer to the look. "No one, it appears, very much the worse beyond the

fright and shaking. The two are walking up the drive. But where is Bee? Have you been much frightened?"

"Frightened!" echoed Mrs. Lincoln, and then she told how gently the Bowerdale Ariel had done his spiriting.

"And Bee?"

"Poor Bee! She is in the library. She betook herself there at once—to hide her white face, I believe."

At that moment feet were heard outside; another, and the two young men were in the hall. Aunt Jo was there too, shaking hands with both at once, laughing and crying by turns as she did so. But there was no Beatrix. Charlie Duncombe, as the lawyer had done before him, cried:

"Where is Bee?"

Then the lawyer's wife, as she also had done before, told how Beatrix had betaken herself to the library.

"Frightened—eh?" said Charlie. "Afraid to come and look at the pieces. Here we are, Bee," he shouted, as he hurried from the hall, sending his strong young voice down the passage before him as he went, so that Beatrix must have been at once relieved as to the safety and soundness of his lungs at least.

Anthony Norris, meanwhile, stood half stiffly, wholly silently by. Perhaps he was feeling—as we are all more or less at such moments given to feel even in cases of longer acquaintance—that all the acquaintance, all the friendship, had to begin over again. If he felt even something more than this, something of doubt, say, as to his welcome, his reception, it is not very wonderful. But Mr. Lincoln did not give him much time for the indulging in feelings of any kind, pleasant or the reverse.

"Come," he said, "let us show Miss Bee there are no bones broken;" and before the younger man could resist, he found himself being hurried down the long dim passage that had become so familiar to him.

The library door stood open. At the far end of the room was Miss Thornhill. She was seated at the long empty table, her arms were laid upon it, her face was quite hidden in them, nothing but the dark, glossy head was visible. Charlie Duncombe was bending over her, saying something in a low, tender voice. Anthony Norris stepped back. The lawyer put out a detaining hand, but he was too late. As Beatrix raised her head, a figure in the doorway disappeared, hasty footsteps went echoing down the passage.

CHAPTER VI.

ANTHONY NORRIS had been back a week. Visitors were at the Court. If they were supposed to be there with any view to his particular entertainment, they were something of a failure. Charlie Duncombe and Miss Thornhill did the honours of the neighbourhood: arranged rides, drives, picnics, water-parties; but as yet Anthony had found no time, or, it might be, inclination to join in them. Not even the lovely summer days—still less, it seemed, Miss Thornhill—had power to tempt him from the big, somewhat sombre room, where, away from the laughing, idle world by which he was surrounded, he worked, or was supposed to be working, at nobody quite knew what. Of course there were times and seasons when he could not so absent himself, but the bronzed, dark-eyed, rather stern-faced stranger made no particular impression upon anybody, and perhaps faithful Aunt Jo was the only one in all the big, cheerful household who really troubled herself as to him or his doings. I say, “perhaps,” because if the mistress of the big house may have been supposed to do so, the young man himself was certainly unconscious of it. He only knew that he had never seen her more smiling, more light-hearted, and that Charles Duncombe was for ever at her elbow. They were together now, strolling side by side about the lawn and gardens.

It was a morning fresh from Paradise. The sun shone, roses bloomed; a light breeze came whispering over the flower-beds and brought their stolen fragrance to Anthony Norris as he stood at the open library-window, watching the unconscious couple. Mr. Lincoln had entered the room, and was now watching him, of which he was himself unconscious until the lawyer’s hand was on his shoulder.

“Well,” cried Mr. Lincoln cheerfully, “why are you not out among the roses this fine morning like our young friends here? ‘Two are company, three none;’ that what you are thinking of?”

Anthony made no answer. He still stood gazing out upon the flowers and sunshine, with the figures of the two young people wandering happily in their midst. But he turned at last.

“I am thinking,” he said coldly, “that it is a pity you had not told me my service here was ended.”

The lawyer gave a little cough.

“Not quite, my dear sir, I think. She will——”

“Don’t talk to me of it,” broke in Anthony angrily. “I will have no more to do with it. It has worked mischief enough. For the cursed money, if you are thinking of that, fling it into the nearest ditch; I will never touch a dollar of it.”

“No?” said Mr. Lincoln; “that’s a pity.”

“Pity!” cried the young man; “the only pity is that I should have been kept in ignorance of what has occurred. Knowing what you must have known, why was I not to know it too? Was it necessary I should be brought back to see that?” pointing with his finger. “When I could have gone from this and her you bade me stay. Now it has come to this, there is no choice left me but to go; but,” his lips trembled, his voice fell, “I leave my happiness, my life, behind me.”

Mr. Lincoln’s big nose was buried in his handkerchief, he was blowing upon it a blast long and lusty, a blast that might have been one of emotion or of sympathy, but which, in truth, savoured suspiciously of triumph. What he might have said, with what words have met his companion’s reproaches, will never now be known. Miss Thornhill was seen approaching. The next moment, and before Anthony Norris could so much as utter one word of protest, Mr. Lincoln had called to her, and she was hastening towards them.

“Now, my dear,” he began as she joined them, “here is our friend, who has something to say to you. He has been telling me all about it, and as I shall only be in the way, I will leave you;” and with treacherous eagerness the wily man of law hurried off to find Miss Duncombe, and prepare her for the instant departure of her favourite for Shanghai.

For the first few minutes the two thus left stood facing one another with never a word between them. Beatrix looked enquiringly, it may be a little anxiously even, at her companion. She was thinking she had never seen him look quite like that before. Whatever it was he had to say, it was evident that he could not find the courage to begin. Was it very strange or wonderful that it should be so? As she stood before him, with all the freshness of the summer’s morning about her, the soft flush of summer roses on her cheek, the dewy light and life of all the summer’s gladness in her eyes, he told himself he could not speak—such words, that is, as now alone were left to him.

It was Beatrix at last who broke the strange silence.

"Well," she said gently, "what is it, anything very dreadful?"

Then he knew that he could keep silence no longer, that he must speak, must say what he had to say as best he could.

"Dreadful?" he said slowly, echoing her words. "No, I think you will scarcely find it very dreadful. It can scarcely surprise you even. It is only 'Good-bye,' nothing more. I have decided to trouble you no longer."

"Good-bye?" she echoed wonderingly.

"Yes, good-bye," he said. "Do you find it so difficult to believe in your release? And yet," he went on bitterly, "you may well do so, seeing, as you have seen, how even your hate had no power to rid you of me."

"Yes," she interrupted him quickly.

"It is not too strong a word then?" he said sharply; "but why should it be? How could you look on me with anything like toleration even? How see in me anything but the adventurer, the fortune-hunter?"

Beatrix shook her head.

"No?" he said a little eagerly.

"No," she returned, her eyes flashing, "I have had no such thoughts; I have never so wronged you. How could I do so, seeing, as I, too, have seen, you only anxious to avoid me? Knowing, too, how difficult it has been at times for you even to tolerate me; how——"

He stopped her with a movement of his hand.

"You are mistaken," he said quietly. "The difficulty has not been to tolerate you, but"—he paused—"to hate you."

Beatrix made no sign. She stood, her hands clasped tightly together, her eyes, not on him, but gazing out straight before to where the sunshine streamed and the flowers bloomed, careless alike of who came or went, of greetings or farewells.

"So I am going," he went on, finding she did not speak. "Going, not because I hate you, as you seem to think, but because I love you—love you as honestly, as tenderly, as the man you have chosen can ever do. There is no more that I can say. Give me your hand, and let me go while I can find courage to say good-bye, and leave you."

Then Beatrix brought her eyes back to the dark, passionate, longing face.

"Good-bye," she said gently, and put out her hand. He held it lingeringly in his for the space of half a minute; then

let it quickly fall, and without another word was gone. Not quite from the room. At the door Beatrix's voice recalled him.

"Yes?" he said hesitatingly, remembering, it may be, a previous occasion.

"Come back," she said; "there is something I must say—something I must ask you!"

Then he went back to where she stood.

What had come over her since last he looked? What was this face she turned upon him, radiant, smiling, yet tender, wistful?

"Come nearer," she cried softly, then laid a hand lightly on his. "Now tell me, when did you begin—well, not to hate me?"

Anthony could only stand and look at her. Then suddenly, in a flash, he knew what it was. He drew nearer, very much nearer indeed.

"Tell me," he cried impetuously, "when did you first begin to—well, love me?"

After that there was no more pretence between them. Cousin Charlie coming in some ten minutes later found the two laughing over a faded bunch of violets, and the photo of a young lady with yellow hair (which latter Beatrix had come upon that spring morning, weeks ago now). But he did not seem in the least disturbed by the sight. He had the youngest Miss Turner with him, and was, if anything, in better spirits even than usual.

And all this time Mr. Lincoln's dog cart was being driven up and down before the hall-door. Mr. Lincoln himself was on the terrace with Miss Duncombe, who was looking very disturbed indeed.

"Dear me!" she cried, as she took out her watch for about the twentieth time, "that poor dear young man will never get back to Shanghai at this rate!"

And Aunt Joanna was right. He never did.

IN A FLOWER-MARKET.

CHAPTER I.

ITS true name was the "Campo dei Fiori"—the "field of flowers." Turned into literal English, the name has a musical sound, and to people who have a leaning towards things that are poetical, it might suggest something unreal, but as lovely as dreams of the imagination can be.

Instead of this it was a scene of real and most practical life.

The stout Roman women who brought in the loads of freshly-cut vegetables at the

rising of the sun, and who were by no means well content if they were not sold while the day was still very young indeed, never troubled their homely heads about poesy or picturesqueness, or, in fact, with anything beyond the daily work and the daily needs. The men who haggled over their ironmongery, and those who clinked their earthenware pots to show they had the true sound ring in them, were as practical, and as sharp, and as ready to "do" a customer as the dirtiest or the ugliest hawker in the universe.

The flower-girls were different; they did look at each other, so finding a mirror for their own charms, or a foil as the case might be.

The upshot of all was that there was not a much more picturesque sight to be had in Rome than one could have any day by getting up early, and by walking through the cool shady streets to the big old Campo dei Fiori.

Garbage and broken flowers, and littery stalls, and cross vendors, are all non-existent if only you will go early enough. Go early and breathe the fresh clear air, and see the dewy sparkling of the green and flowery things, and forget you are in the midst of a big city.

Hurrying tourists can rarely find time for it, but the happy ones who do not drive post-haste through life see many a lovely and fair sight, and see, too, the real people of a place.

"Lena," said a big woman, with her brown hands on her broad hips, "there is your signorina again. Did you know she was coming? Because you are a little fool if you did. Selling all your flowers as you have done."

"I see her," answered the girl, but she made no sign of being perturbed; her fingers were loosely linked together, and her arms hung loosely down over her woollen apron with the bars of dusky oriental colour woven into it. She wore a purple bodice, and snowy linen was gathered over her shoulders, and hung in full sleeves to her elbows. Above all was a dusky head, a brown face, with features chiselled as clearly as those of an old marble, and about the whole free bearing of her the simple grace and unthinking dignity of a child of the fields and hills.

The woman who had spoken to her was as handsome as a Roman woman of forty can be, but when a black-browed, imperious dame reaches that age, one knows that her charms are of the strong and vigorous

order, and that the softer beauties are departed. Both were peasants, and both had the picturesque aspect that peasants who wear the old peasant dress must have.

"You had no roses for her yesterday. Do you not care?" and the woman pulled the thick folds of woollen stuff which guarded her head from the strengthening sun more forward over her brow. Behind, its fringed ends protected the nape of her neck; a shake of her shoulders arranged these to her satisfaction. "She's got friends with her; she's looking over to Carlotta Moro. Are you content to lose her custom? I've no patience. Where would your father be if I had let customers slip through my fingers in that way?"

"You talk fast, madre mia. Wait a bit. Is it likely that I let the signorina go from me to 'Lotta? Ecco! do I not know why she looks towards 'Lotta? Ha, ha! I know." While saying this, 'Lena had set her back on her mother, and so the words might pass for a soliloquy. However, this was not her reason for turning. Having turned she stooped, and from under an upturned basket she drew forth a huge bunch of roses. Clustering, half wild banksias, sleepy-headed tea-roses, gorgeous crimson blooms; flower-stems and her own brown fingers were shining and dripping with the clear, cool water in which she had kept her treasures fresh. She gave them a little shake, and she wiped her fingers on her handsome apron that was worn for the market. All the while she was looking about her.

"A new signor to-day," was her mother's laconic remark; "truly, the signorina is changeable. But never mind, she makes them all buy. That is good for us."

"Changeable!" echoed the girl. "You think that? Why does she come to us so often, then?"

Her eyes were flashing alternately in two directions. On one side was a group of English people coming along—a party of three, consisting of a short girl, and a tall girl, and a gentleman. One could easily at once catalogue the gentleman as an artist—a young one, one perhaps new in Rome. Away in the opposite direction, behind the aforesaid 'Lotta, was another gentleman, also English—one cannot hide the mark of an Englishman. This one looked about him curiously; at the exact moment we see him he was talking to a guardia—a policeman, as one might say—a being with a cocked hat, and in a uniform of blue and scarlet, and shining appendages.

"Why?" jerked the woman; "why? Why, because she has set her mind on having you in her picture."

"And why not?"

"You say that? You, Elena Cagiati, the child of—of—such as I and your father! Is that your will? Diavolo! but I'll have none of it!"

She suddenly stopped, and, like the changing of a mask, her angry face became one broad smile.

"Signora Cagiati," said the short English girl, "do not say I am not your most faithful customer; I bring you always someone new."

"That is true, signorina; and was I not saying the very same thing to 'Lena here the moment I saw you?"

"You have some roses for me?" The girl had a quick, impulsive way with her. This was to 'Lena, but in a second she turned back to the mother. "I shall make you angry, but you know how much I care for that."

"The signorina could do nothing but make us all happy—has she not done so a thousand times—all the winter?"

"Keep that idea, amica mia!" cried the girl. "And now that the winter has gone, and the spring is here, just give me a pleasure."

"Is it so that the signorina speaks to me?—to Antonia Cagiati, the contadina?" and the big woman lifted her bare arms and bowed her head with a grave grace that was imperial.

"You agree?" cried the girl, by name Adelaide Stewart.

The woman's expression changed to one of deep concern.

"I do not understand," she said.

"Where is your memory?" said the other in the same quick manner.

As she dashed out her words she threw a glance all over the broad space. The sun was pouring in from the east, cutting the shadows of the old houses sharply on the ground; to the rear were the rough carts, and the rougher asses that had drawn them in, with the primitive rope harness dangling about their legs; the stand with flaunting prints and calico looked a very kaleidoscope in the brilliant sunlight, and with the frolicsome lifting of the spring wind, sent the pennons of its gay wares flying hither and thither. One young contadina was bargaining for some huge round earrings from the market jeweller. Behind her was the man who sold the iron-ware, and he was beating a great

copper conca—the water-pot of the country—with an iron rod. Noise would bring custom, he must be thinking. Then came the flower-stalls; the air was full of the scent of blue violets, and of the aromatic perfume of a huge bowlful of white pinks.

Past these pinks came the gentleman who had been talking to the guardia. He wore a black coat and a broad-brimmed, soft felt hat—a cleric.

"Do you come here every morning?" called the English girl as soon as he came within hearing.

Her colour heightened, and her energy became one degree more energetic.

"Do you?" he smiled.

"I have an object."

"And your cousin?"

The tall, fair girl had fallen pale for an instant, but being addressed she too answered with a spice of energy—energy of manner was wholly a thing to be assumed with her:

"Yes, Mr. Ogilvie; the cousin, too, has an object. She had not when she started, but she has now. She is going to buy that conca the man is beating a tattoo on—that is, when Addie can come and talk."

"You are speechless?" asked the gentleman.

"Almost," she said, dropping the energy, and speaking softly. "My Italian is understood by my teacher, but not by the people here."

Then a little flash of merriment came into her grey eyes.

"Their patois is difficult, perhaps?"

"Let me bargain for you, Miss Laura!" said the gentleman. "I know your cousin has her work before her—she will not succeed at once—eh, Benson?"

The young artist shrugged his shoulders. He was a fine young man, artistically got-up in a velvet coat and a hat battered into the due shapelessness of the picturesque. But he was not the ideal artist altogether; his hair was cropped, and his easy toilet was faultless in the care of it.

He was a student—a wealthy student, which adjective must both supply and suggest what we have no space to say about him. A genial, good fellow besides.

"It is a question, I think," and again he shrugged those broad shoulders of his. "There seems a doubt. Shall I go to the rescue?"

Adelaide was talking vehemently and gesticulating.

Benson moved towards her.

"Ask the signor," and the girl's cheeks

were flushed with her struggle. The peasant-woman was holding by her notions.

"The signor paints also?" and Madame Cagiati gathered a handful of peas, and opening one pod after another like so many little pop-guns, shelled them fast into a basin on her stall. Eyes were not wanted for this work, and she used hers in taking stock of this fresh signor.

The young man himself was critically looking at 'Lena. Certainly she had the head that was wanted for the picture in the studio above his. He had his studio on a fourth floor; Adelaide Stewart had hers on the floor over him.

"Yes," he nodded carelessly. Perhaps Marmaduke Benson liked to make much of his careless manner. All his life he had played the genial sovereign. So he lounged easily against the Cagiati stall, and went on: "Yes, I paint, and I find fault with the signorina, and she returns the compliment by picking holes in my canvases."

"And perhaps they deserve it, signor." Pop went a pea-pod, and the woman's black eyes flashed with a carelessness as regal as his own. "If I were the signorina, though, once would be the time you would find fault with me."

"Ha, ha! that is a stroke for me!"

"What makes you angry?" said Adelaide. "If you will not let me have 'Lena, there's an end of it. My picture must go."

"Go to the church steps, signorina." The woman spoke shortly.

"Bah! I can get costumes there; I cannot get 'Lena's face."

"No," and the young man's carelessness was set aside; "no, the signorina has judged rightly. There is but one face which is fit for her picture."

"The face of my girl?"

"Yes. Did no artist ever paint you when you were——"

"A girl? That is as it may have been."

"You will consider?" asked he. "We will come for the answer to-morrow morning."

"I have considered," answered the woman, and a shower of fresh peas leaped out of their pods and skipped gaily over her brown fingers to their companions in the bowl. "I am her mother, I am not her father; and, if you must know, I am not her lover."

Both the girl and he laughed.

"You laugh!" and having said the words her lips shut with a jerk.

"I was a fool," said Benson. Then

he turned neatly a little compliment, said some nonsense about the impossibility of 'Lena's mother having the hardness and the cruelty and the selfishness of a man, be he father or lover. It was the crudest flattery ever heard, but the young man had a pleasant, genial way with him, and his handsome face made the silly words sweet.

The purchase of the conca was just completed, and the two buyers here came up.

Laura was gay and radiant. The excitement, the sweet, fresh morning air, had brought roses to her fair cheeks. She wore a white dress of some soft material, and though its warm woolliness kept her safe from the treachery of a Roman spring, yet the pure whiteness of it clothing her free, light figure made her almost a perfect personification of the brilliant sunny season.

"How am I to get it home?" said she.

"Carry it on your head, and act the Roman maiden of ancient days," suggested Benson.

"With you in your velvet coat beside me—eh?"

"That is nothing," laughed he. "It is better than the contrast of a stern black coat." He turned and nodded over to the contadina.

"We shall come to-morrow morning, then."

"Ebbene, I say nothing!" The woman's face relaxed, but she went on shelling her peas.

The party strolled away, the great copper conca being slung by its handles between Laura and the artist. It was a picture of quite a different sort to that which reigned over the old Campo dei Fiori, but, nevertheless, there was a quaint, picturesque look about the two as they went gaily over the uneven stones of the market, swinging the shining, antique, vase-shaped thing between them.

Addie and the cleric were behind—two opposite people. She studied art and was impulsive; he dreamed and dreamed of poesy, but lived a purely practical life. He was a worn-out curate from an East London parish.

"Are you inclined for an excursion this afternoon?" she was asking. "We are going in for antiquities and early Christians."

"I am ready; what is it?"

"Nothing that you need read up for, so you can be as lazy as you like all the morning." She had her hands full of 'Lena's roses, and lifted their dewy freshness

to her cheeks. "Do you think I shall get the girl, or not?"

"The girl? I did not hear——"

CHAPTER II.

ALONG the old Appian Way these four young people were driving. Certainly there was an interest, a vast and powerful interest in the place, but—one could not help it—the gladness of youth and of the radiant spring made their thoughts fly from the dust and rubbish of the dead years, and hover—as a summer-bird hovers—over the charms and delights of the to-day that was so fresh and glad.

Who could gaze forward over the vast ocean-like sweep of the still Campagna to the misty hills, without a rush of pathetic gladness welling up in his soul? What was it to them that the same quiet hills had looked down on scenes of busy life and of furious warfare, when now there reigned only the hush of dead silence? To these four that silence was broken by their own glad laughter and talking, and their eyes came back from the misty hills where white Frascati and dim Albano were clustered aloft, to revel and dance over the measureless desert of rank, waving grass and of flowery luxuriance.

"We have two things on our consciences this afternoon," began Addie, when they were well out beyond the tombs. "Which shall be done first?"

"The Columbaria and the Catacombs?" said Ogilvie. "The Catacombs are the most important."

"And the most dreadful!" And Laura gave an involuntary shudder.

"You are a perfect idiot," reproved her cousin. "Have I not told you a hundred times that everyone comes out of them disappointed? You go in with your imagination full of vastness, and you come up with it shrunk to littleness."

They stopped at the gate for the Catacombs. Another carriage was at the moment setting down its occupants, and the said occupants were friends of the Stewarts, winter residents in Rome. Together they strolled up through the untidy garden-way to the door of entrance. More people were there, and they were also acquaintances.

Some made jokes—people will joke at all times and even in the jaws of so awful a burial-place as this—some were silent.

Laura was quiet and white.

The customary lighting of wax-tapers was gone through, and the guide headed

the downward path. What a long string of people! fully twenty were there.

In the many turns and windings of the subterranean chambers and passages parties got funnily mixed up, but at such sight-seeing as this all the world is kin, and terrified Laura clutched at friend and stranger alike. Once it was Ogilvie, often it was Benson, then a short, fat German felt her hand tugging at his coat-tail, then a young American found her pushing her slim, white self between him and the damp walls, for fear she should be left too far behind.

At last—stairs! Blessed daylight and the warm, sunny air. Thank Heaven for light!

Addie was expatiating in her impulsive way on the expectations and disappointments of catacombs in general to a small group of three. Laura was away by the gate, where she had a crowd of dirty, picturesque children about her. She had bought roses from every child, and having got their soldi, the handsome young peasants were ready to talk as fast as she would let them.

There was no hurry—one does not hurry in such warm air. When, too, one's whole body and mind is released from the acting out of duty—there are duties of sight-seeing—one may stroll, and linger, and chatter comfortably with one's friends.

Five minutes, ten minutes, a quarter of an hour went by. People were shaking hands; some said, "Good-bye;" some said, "Al riverderci," they would be always meeting in that gay sight-seeing time.

One carriage had driven off, next came that of the Stewarts, behind was a third, with people stepping into it.

Laura was seated, and by the carriage-door young Benson was standing. The other two were "so fond of talking," laughed Laura.

Her companion laughed too.

"We will repeat that to your cousin; dare we?"

Laura's eyebrows lifted.

"She will give you your answer," said she.

A few minutes more passed.

"That fellow is such a dreamer!" mused Benson.

"What fellow?"

"Ogilvie."

"Mr. Ogilvie! He is worked to death! Dreams? Don't you know what he does at home? My brother knows him, he was at college with him."

"No," said the other, and a little of his careless way marked his one word.

"You have no idea of——"

The girl was showing an unusual impulse, but suddenly stopped. The quick warmth of those few words struck the young man by her side, and without any thought of it his whole bearing changed.

His face had surprise and questioning upon it.

She—she to make much of Ogilvie? He knew the impulsive Addie did this in her masterful way; but this one? He had glorified himself in the fond belief that his own brilliance was admired, fitly admired by this fair and gentle Laura.

Here was a new view of the case.

Laura's face was crimson, deeper in rosy colour than the deepest of her roses; but then, Addie was running up, and discomfort would be gone with her gay rattle.

"Where is Mr. Ogilvie?" she cried. "That dear man! he is bent on discovering something, I am always losing him. One of these days he will be irrecoverable. Hunt him up, do, Mr. Benson."

Some more delay, but at the end of it Benson came back without Ogilvie.

"How tiresome!" Addie certainly pouted.

"Addie!" Laura's face was white to the lips, and her voice was just a low wail of terror. "He is in there—shut in!" she gasped.

"You are too utterly ridiculous!" and Addie set her foot on the carriage-step.

"Am I?" was the scornful answer.

And next moment Laura, her hand upon her cousin's shoulder, moved her aside, passed her, and in a second was flying up the shaggy wilderness of a path.

She had spoken truth.

Ogilvie had lingered one minute to copy an inscription, in that minute the man before him had turned an angle of the intricately-involved passages—he hurried forward. Nothing, no one, was to be seen, no line of twinkling tapers showed; there was a distant murmur of voices, but that faded. He ran, he—went wrong.

Then it came upon his mind that he was lost. For one instant the balance of mental power was gone. Only for a second; after that he was calm and strong.

He felt that he faced death.

Of course all was done in a few moments,

but Laura Stewart was living through an age.

Benson followed her; three or four men who had been standing about caught up her fear; her white face and her few eager words electrified the man who had guided them. Some tapers were lighted, and the search began; quick, and careful, and watchful. Cries and assurances of help were shouted every few seconds.

There came no answer.

One long winding passage, then an angle turned, almost immediately after a second angle, then a step—Laura remembered that.

Then every arm waved, and the flicker of the tapers spread their puny light over what was a comparatively open space—they called that a chapel, and in it was a rude altar of stone. Before it was a dark figure—a marked darkness in the vague darkness the tapers made.

Ogilvie was kneeling, but had fallen forward unconscious. With arms outspread, he was lying against that rude grey altar.

They lifted him up, and carried him swiftly along.

Laura pressed forward. She said nothing. Then a word struck her—it was her own name. The light of a taper had shone upon her face, and Ogilvie, awake, grasped all in a moment. After that Laura no more pressed forward, and, strange to say, when once again daylight shone upon them, she was missed from amongst the group of voluble Italians.

She was sitting in the carriage by her cousin's side when Benson and Ogilvie came out to them.

Benson and Ogilvie! Was that Ogilvie? He was a dark man, a man with almost raven hair, and Benson's companion had a head like snow. By-and-by, Ogilvie—how they all tried to make light of the horrible accident—took off his big hat and felt himself, or rather his head, all over.

"I believe those fellows would like to make a show of me. I have heard of these sudden transformations, but I never dreamt of being the victim of one myself." There was a forced gaiety about his manner.

"You will have your normal blackness again to-morrow, I dare say," said Benson. "Why—ha! Isn't there some fable about a jackdaw, or a crow, or some such creature getting itself painted white?"

"What an ignoramus you are," said Addie. "The point of that old story is just

the very thing you should avoid with our friend. Is he a hypocrite? does he set up a false show?—does he?”

Benson shrugged his shoulders.

“Be a friend, Ogilvie, and get me out of my scrape.”

“Indeed I shall not; let us make him exercise his genius for flattery.” Ogilvie looked from Addie to Laura. “Now!” He set one hand upon Benson’s knee, and again he looked to Laura.

Now this young lady having gone through a pretty sharp experience of terror, was at the moment lying back on the cushions of the carriage, and feeling limp. One tender word would have made her cry, and for such tears she would have been angry with herself.

She, in the past half-hour, had learnt a secret, and like a true-hearted maiden had the noble simplicity of believing she could, and ought to, keep it a secret. Gentle and tender of soul, she suddenly grasped a quick and firm control over herself. She sat upright, and picking up some of her forgotten roses, she dashed forth some gay words.

“Three against one!—too bad,” and Benson made a gesture of disgust.

“A hundred to one,” she cried. “Now begin and say the best things you can think of. As soon as we are in Rome again, Mr. Ogilvie will be a hero, and unless you show yourself friendly, you will receive the cold shoulder. Better stick to us all, and get a little reflection of the hero-worship.”

So they went on, and soon they had left the open vastness of the Campagna. The hills behind and around were draped with the filmy gauze of twilight, the fair spring twilight which has the clear whiteness shining through it. Behind, too, through the openings of the hills, were the grand colours of the gathering sunset, and as their road wound, one face and another got the radiant flush upon it.

But no one said a word about it—each one’s tongue rattled as it had never done before, each one flew instinctively from any subject that was grave or that led to thought, and so on from thought to a speech which might touch the event of the afternoon.

Ogilvie loitered as the girls got out of the carriage. Laura was the last. Addie had run up the staircase leading to their apartment. Laura’s impulse was to follow her—an unthinking impulse, and one which

in a moment was controlled by her quiet, simple dignity.

Perhaps she was pale; if so, the pallor only made her fairness more delicate. She took some shawls from Ogilvie’s arm, and said, really in quite a matter-of-fact voice:

“I suppose, in reality, you were only a few seconds.”

“A few seconds? I do not know. I cannot think of it. I cannot speak about it yet. How were you there? How——”

The paleness was gone from the girl’s face.

“How?” she murmured. “I don’t know. Yes,” she cried, setting a strong control over herself; “yes, I do know. I believe I was the first to see the possibility.”

“And——”

“And I flew,” she cried eagerly.

In an instant she saw she had betrayed herself.

“And my life, my reason,” said Ogilvie in a low undertone.

“I shall not speak one word more about it,” she said, speaking in a wild way that was totally unlike herself. “Don’t you want some tea? Aunt will never give us any if we stay behind the others. You’ve no idea of her tyranny!”

CHAPTER III.

JOHN OGILVIE was a hero, as the girls had said he would be. Days went by, and, go where he would, the sensationalism of his adventure had gone before him, and every eye was turned to see the man whose hair had changed from raven-black to snowy-white in a moment; the man who had been buried alive, so to speak.

But it was too much for him. He ran away from it, and set off on an excursion to the mountains. He said hero-worship was too tyrannous to be endured.

Easy to say, but the truth was that he was shaken by his adventure. And the more he tried to nerve himself, the more he failed; the more he sought to speak of it, so much the more did his friends, thinking it for his good, persistently lead away from the subject. Laura avoided him; Addie and Benson were absorbed in matters artistic. It was becoming clear how their comradeship would end. Ogilvie at last told himself that a week or two away would help him to conquer his difficulties.

So he went in and out of one country inn and another, drifting along the delicious days, till they once more found him with

his nerves at rest, and his mind quietly looking at things as they were.

On a May evening he was wandering down one of the long green alleys by Genzano; the air was soft and sweet; the half-sad note of doves fell in with the humour of the hour; children's laughter came in too; farther off there sounded the gay refrain of a popular song, as labourers came slowly in from the fields.

Through the pale green of the limes was the intense, cloudless blue of the sky; from a break between two trees Ogilvie looked out, and saw across the vast level of the Campagna below him the misty, formless substance of Rome. By instinct his eyes sought for the "bubble" of St. Peter's dome glistening from the vague mistiness. He could not see it. Rome without that aerial "bubble" was scarcely Rome, and his gaze wandered over slope and valley, over shining white town and darkening wood, until it was caught by a sudden glow of light.

Away in the west came rapid, floating islands of amethyst and crimson and gold, rising from the misty, ocean-like land, soaring and sweeping aloft till the radiant blue overhead was paled. Paled, then flushed. How long he watched he could not tell. It seemed an age of wonder and of indescribable grandeur of beauty, yet it was but a short while. The flush of sunset is short in Italy, the pale gloaming is shorter; night was upon him warm and soft before he knew.

And then he turned, and, having outer things shut away from his eyes, he fell to thinking. Naturally the closer things and the intimate friends of his present life came uppermost in those aimless thoughts of his.

You say "naturally"—why so?

Might not faraway interests have been so much the stronger that space should have been annihilated, and that his thoughts should have turned to his London parish? They might have done so, but—here comes the gist of the matter—there was a spell in the present which neither past nor distant things had ever held.

John Ogilvie was in love. Yes, very decidedly in love. Once he had told himself that work was to be his mistress—that was before he had seen Rome and Laura Stewart. Once he had held before his eyes the ideal of a solitary, unselfish life; now, presided over by Laura Stewart, he saw a life which was not solitary, but was still to be unselfish.

Now, how soon should he go back to Rome? He was rid of weakness. Nay, as he walked leisurely in the soft, young night, he derided himself for having come away. He would go on the morrow.

He would be driven to the Albano station in the early, dewy morning, and would get to Rome in good time. Why should he not breakfast with the Stewarts?

Some little matter went wrong at the inn; the old, broken carriage was not ready—no matter what the hindrance was. A fact remained—Ogilvie could not go by the early train.

No man is perfect, and Ogilvie was—a man. He could be vexed, to put it mildly.

In plain English he fumed. Also he spoke certain distinct words of disapproval to the lazy Faello who was buckling or tying on the very rudimentary harness, words which made the said Faello fire out a retort—"that sober padre to say such words!"

While he fumed, a lad came in leisurely, but perspiring. He brought a telegram up from Albano. One gets into a fair condition of heat if one walks all the way from Albano, even in the cool of the morning.

Ogilvie loftily ignored the boy. He was too angry for anything. Nevertheless, the telegram was for him.

Here it is: "From Mrs. Stewart to the Rev. J. Ogilvie, etc., etc.—Meet the nine train at Albano. Plan the day's work. Do not fail."

He showed a very different manner and a very different voice as he turned hurriedly to Faello and bid him hasten. He must be at Albano a quarter of an hour earlier than he had intended. Friends were coming, there was a lira for him if he got him at the station in time.

Backsheesh, backsheesh! What wonderful magic power is in you! Just let the circle of a silver coin shine before the dullest eyes in creation, and what sense leaps into them, what activity electrifies slow limbs!

Of course Faello drove well; of course Ogilvie stood waiting on the platform as the train came puffing leisurely in.

What a comical side there is in these meetings! One would have thought that the separation, instead of having been only for a fortnight, had been for years, so warm and effusive were the hand-shakings and the greetings.

"You look a new man," said Benson.

"So strong and robust," added kindly

Mrs. Stewart. She was a slight, round woman, both lovely and loveable, clear-eyed, and genial, one of those happy beings who are gifted with the faculty of saying just the right thing one wants said. All the girls who knew her wanted to kiss her, and for the men and women, they either were mad to protect her or to be helped by her. "Yes, I mean it," she added with an air of supreme conviction. "There is nothing like the mountain towns to cure the lassitude of Rome. I wish we could have a week here, don't you, girls?"

"Wishing again," said Addie. "We have to go, so there is no good in wishing."

"Go?" ejaculated Ogilvie—this was as they were driving along. "Where?"

Benson, on the box beside Faello, heard the exclamation.

"They are all frightened about fever, my friend, and they are packed and are going off to England the day after tomorrow. England does not see me for a year. Shall I court the fever, or shall I come up to you in your mountain retreat?"

"Neither. I was coming into Rome to-day if your telegram had not kept me."

Ogilvie's tongue halted.

"That sounds complimentary, Mr. Ogilvie. You do not bless us," said the impulsive Addie.

"Perhaps I meant the most——"

"There, don't say any more. If there is a thing I loathe it is a fulsome compliment. I had far rather have you snub me."

"Addie dear, how can you? Now we shall have no kindly speeches, and I for one shall be desolate," put in the bright, sweet mother. "Do not obey her, Mr. Ogilvie."

So they ran on talking a great deal, and enjoying themselves, though in all the light talk there was very little worth putting on paper.

All the various experiences of the fortnight had to be detailed. In the midst of some story Mrs. Stewart was telling, her daughter burst in with this:

"I have conquered, Mr. Ogilvie. Yes; I have ridden rough-shod over father, and mother, and lover, and all!"

"I am in a fog!"

"No, you're not. My picture. Now?"

Perhaps he was in a worse fog than before, for he had never seen the said picture, and did not know its subject; had, in fact, only come in for shreds and ends of talk about it. He knew she had a

studio, so supposed that pictures came forth from it.

To put it suggestively he—was not Benson.

"I must plead guilty of dense darkness," he said. "I can never have seen your picture."

He looked over to Laura in a mystified way for help.

She gave a little laugh.

"No one has seen it yet, not even I, and I climb those stairs to her studio every day. There is always a scuffle and a veiling when I touch the handle of the door. I have seen the model, though," and Laura nodded her fair head with quite a gay sprightliness.

Ogilvie still looked his questioning.

"You remember the girl in the Campo dei Fiori, Mr. Ogilvie—that lovely girl in the peasant dress we always buy the roses from?"

"Old Mother Cagiati's daughter," explained her cousin. "You know."

"Yes, I remember now." However, the details of the model-hunting had not come within Ogilvie's ken, and he floundered into a remark which was not apposite. "The girl was shy, was she not?"

"Shy! Not a bit of it! Mère Cagiati stood on the proprieties, but I've beaten her. I came across the lover, and of course he had to agree to what Lena wanted. And he is pressed into the service too. You'll have a grand Horatius, Mr. Benson."

Addie turned up to that gentleman, who was perched behind her head.

Ogilvie had seen a huge canvas in Benson's studio; the subject was the old story of the fight of Horatius on the Janiculum. The young painter's ideas were vast; the whole array of armies, and people, and senators were sketched; but—Horatius! He still wanted the ideal Roman when Ogilvie saw the work.

"Yes," answered Benson, "yes, I am more than fortunate. One does not see such a head and such a frame, as that Pompeo Gati has, in a long day's march. He ought to make the success of the picture."

"There you go—I shall have to take you down a peg! Don't fancy you are going to soar aloft like that. Dear! do look at those flowers—they are a perfect carpet! Mother darling, time is no object, and I must have some. Come, Laura."

The four climbed a bank. A straggling

bit of woodland was here, and in the shadowy warmth by the young trees' feet were flowers—masses of flowers.

Mrs. Stewart sat quietly in the carriage and waited. She talked to Faello, and she learnt his small history, heard about his wife and his child—in a word, charmed him, as she did everyone.

She did not notice how the time flew. However, as Addie had said, "time was no object," and she was content with her delicious laziness, and content with what pleased the girls.

Laura was the first to return. She was a picture of fair radiance as she ran up to the carriage. Her white dress and her flapping, broad-brimmed, white hat, all shining in the burning brilliance of the sunshine, her face tinted more than its wont with a rosy warmth, struck Mrs. Stewart. There was a new beauty in the girl's face.

"We have come," cried she.

"So I see, dear."

"Oh, aunt," Laura threw herself on the seat beside Mrs. Stewart, and impulsively clasped one of that lady's hands, "there is something—something to tell you. I am so happy."

Her face flushed rosier, and a glint of tears shone in her glad eyes.

Mrs. Stewart felt a trembling in the fingers that were clasping hers, and, sympathetic woman that she was, fell herself to trembling for companionship.

"Ah!—what!—dear Laura!" These vague exclamations were all her tongue could frame. But she was quickly mastering the difficulty. "A secret? Let me hear it," she added in her kindly way.

"I am not half good enough. He—I really don't know how——"

Mrs. Stewart smiled, and looked to John Ogilvie, who stood by her elbow.

"You will give her to me, Mrs. Stewart?" he asked simply.

He, too, seemed for the moment to lack speech, but his hand, too, sought Mrs. Stewart's.

Away on the top of the bank, Addie and Benson were fencing. Benson had seen the other two start for the carriage, and he was struck by some wild desire to speak some personal thoughts of his own.

"I have something to say," he blundered.

"Is that new?" asked she.

"You mean I am a rattle. But—listen now. do."

"I cannot listen to anything serious. I never was less inclined for it."

"You are leaving——"

"The day after to-morrow. We have not changed. Do you want any more packages taken to England for you?"

"You know all that. Do leave those flowers."

"You are sure there is nothing contraband in your package. 'Leave these flowers?' I should think not! I am going over to those forget-me-nots. Is that syringa? Growing wild, I declare! Go and get as much as your arms will hold."

He was not to be banished in this way. But when had he ever before felt himself so tongue-tied?

"I want to ask you something before you leave. We shall never get a chance of being alone together after this," he protested.

"Alone together! Do talk common-sense," she cried. "The weight of your thoughts has overcome the usual lightness of your tongue. We must be quick, or we shall have mother in an agony of impatience. Do you want a knife for the syringa?"

"No." The answer was blunt. He suddenly saw his opportunity. "Yes," he cried, "I do want one," and he followed her as she waded through the masses of grass, and violets, and cyclamens, and ferns.

"It is no use coming to me, then, for I left mine at home."

"Will you give me—— Miss Stewart—Adelaide—I must——"

"You must go and get that syringa, Mr. Benson—Marmaduke. Now, sir, you see the effect of your rudeness to me. I shall not allow you to speak to me all the rest of the day."

He obeyed, and she kept her silence until they were once again with the others.

"My dear Addie," cried her mother. "What are you going to do with all those things? It is a young tree Mr. Benson has pulled up! You should think."

"So I do, mother. I want the things."

"What for?"

"For the studio."

"And you have cleared it out and locked it up," put in Laura with mischief in her eyes.

"So I have. Well, never mind, they can go into Mr. Benson's studio."

OLD SHAWBURTON'S.

It was in the spring-time, more than thirty years ago. April was smiling with unusual amiability on the whole land, and such few tears as she let fall now and then served but to soften and temper what otherwise might have been a too exuberant joy, considering the tender age of the year. No part of the country could have responded more gleefully to this mood of the showery month than did that where rises the range of the lofty Colvern Hills. All the delights which the poets attribute to the spring's return seemed to be realised, and if the wind still held a little persistently from the east, it was yet so softened and subdued by the puffs of balmy south which came with it, that its sting was quite taken out of it, and only prevented the almost unclouded sun from scorching too fiercely. Such weather in such a region could not fail to be enjoyable; every sense was gratified, and even the most hardened cockney could not but reap some pleasure from a ramble along those smooth and easy, if steep hill-paths, which place the Colverns within the reach of the feeblest climber. At that season, too, there was absolute solitude even at mid-day, and, wandering from end to end of the lofty ridge, one would scarce meet a living soul. Of tourists there were absolutely none.

How I came to be lodging at the little cottage embosomed in that wooded cleft half-way up the hillside, and lying just above the straggling village of Colvern Wells, matters not. But there I was, and there occurred to me as strange an experience as it has ever been my luck to encounter throughout a not altogether uneventful life.

Amidst the many dips and hollows, some very precipitous, to be found towards the southern end of the range of hills, and near that part of the Dereford road which skirts them, is, or then was, one peculiarly secluded. Lying far back from the highway, and shrouded by a clustering bower of fir-trees, mountain-ash, and silver-birch, the hollow is scarcely perceptible, the trees appearing but one of the many patches of stunted foliage which clamber up the hill-sides in sheltered places. Only coming upon it from above were you made aware of the existence of a cup-like little amphitheatre, shut in on three sides by the steep, smooth, shouldering hill, whilst the fourth

was closed from view of the road, far down below, by the dense wood.

A few weather-beaten, wind-worn trees straggled up on to the open high ground, and at a little distance helped further to mask the lonely dell. It was as if some huge bird had made her nest there, and, taking advantage of the natural formation, had hidden her home from man's intrusion by cunning artifice.

I had discovered the spot, and had stood gazing over the sheer-down grassy sides into the woody bottom for some minutes before I observed the cottage which nestled in its midst. Scant as was the leafage yet on the trees, the building was so shut in by them that it seemed to be a part and parcel of the natural growth of the place, both in colour and irregular form. Closer scrutiny showed it to be uninhabited and in a ruinous state. The ivy-clad, moss-grown, grey-stone walls, and still more moss-grown, grey slate-roof and small chimney-stack; the shattered window-frames, and panes of broken glass here and there, with a barred, worm-eaten shutter half closed; a small, dilapidated shed, standing apart with a bit of fence enclosing a perfect little wilderness of a garden; all spoke of years of desertion. It was but two storeys high, irregular of shape, as if added to from time to time. As the eye became accustomed to the intricacies of the overhanging boughs and dense undergrowth, the faint indication of a narrow path winding away downhill towards the main road could be discerned; and a more retired, shut-in, obscure abode, for there was no other house within two miles, it would have been hardly possible to imagine. Whilst speculating as to the kind of occupant it might once have had, and what his object could have been in thus shutting himself out from the world, I saw to my surprise that I was not the sole spectator of the scene. On the opposite side of the cup-like hill to that where I had stretched myself upon the grass, and beneath one of the stunted trees which had crept up to the top of the overhanging side, sat a man smoking, and evidently watching me.

He looked quite respectable, and after a little while I rose and wandered round towards him, thinking perhaps he might be able to tell me the history of the cottage. He, too, rose as I approached, and then I saw that he was a young, pale-faced fellow, of middle height, dressed in a suit of grey tweed of common cut. He seemed nervous

and fidgety, twirling and twisting the thin cane he carried in his long, sinewy hands. He was evidently anxious to speak, and turning towards me, but without directly looking at me, said :

"Queer-looking place that, sir, to live in, isn't it?"

"Yes," I answered. "Do you happen to know anything about it? I wasn't aware there was a house down there. Who does it belong to?"

"It used to belong to my grandfather. They say it's haunted now."

"Ah, haunted, is it? Such a place ought to be," I said as I walked closer up to him. "Tell me about it."

"Oh, I couldn't here," he replied gravely. "I shouldn't like to speak of what I have been told so close to the place. I should expect to hear the horrible noises, and I think if I did I should go out of my mind."

This was a strange speech, I thought, and made me wonder whether he wasn't out of his mind already. His downcast, melancholy expression, furtive glances, and nervous, restless manner, added to his mysterious words, quite justified the idea.

"I wonder if it is true," he went on rapidly. "I should like to find out, but I haven't the courage, although I have come down to these parts for the purpose. Do you think you could help me? I mean, would you object to staying out here with me until it is dark? I think I shouldn't so much mind if I wasn't alone, yet they say no two people together hear the sounds; they can only be heard by one person at a time, and that's the difficulty. You are a stranger to me, sir, but you look kind and friendly, and perhaps you——" He paused, and, regarding me with a still furtive but more prolonged look than he had yet bestowed, walked a few paces away from the edge of the hollow. "If you'll come a little farther off, I'll try and tell you what I've heard about it, and what I know about it, but I daren't do so close to it."

I cannot say he was quite the sort of chance companion I should have selected to stroll about with on these lonely hills, but even in those days I was an old traveller, cosmopolitan in my habits, ready to talk to anybody likely to afford amusement, and if this young fellow did happen to be a little out of his wits he could do me no harm; moreover, he had excited my curiosity somewhat, so acquiescing in his suggestion, I walked slowly away with him, back in the direction of Colvern Wells.

Except for his nervous expression, and the twitching of his mouth, he had a pleasant face, if not actually good-looking. His restless eyes were dark and luminous, despite contracted pupils, and his thick, black hair, worn rather long, added to the natural ivory-like pallor of his smooth beardless face. He was a mere boy, probably not above seventeen. He continued puffing away at his short clay pipe, the odour of which, mingling with the pure clear air, struck me as being a little peculiar, and as he presently refilled it from a common purse-shaped pouch, I observed that the tobacco looked peculiar also. We wandered on for some distance in silence, whilst he ever and anon kept looking back towards the copse as if uncertain whether we were yet far enough off to allow of his speaking freely. At last he said :

"Have you not been told, sir, what they say about the noises heard in that house?"

"No, indeed; but I have only been in the neighbourhood a few days."

"Well, they are very awful, from all accounts; most of the people about seem to know of them, if they've not heard them. Sometimes they say they sound as if they were caused by the movement of heavy weights, at others by the human voice moaning mournfully, and then rising sometimes to a shrill wail or cry of agony. Then, it is said, there will be a mingling of the two noises, heavy weights and voice combined. It is altogether indescribable," continued the young fellow, apparently quite terrified at the mere thought.

"How long is it since any one lived there?" I asked.

"Oh, not for many years—nobody, I fancy, since my grandfather."

"Did it belong to him? Did he build it?"

"I think so; I never rightly heard about that. I never saw him. I did not even know my mother, who was his daughter, although at times I seem to recollect the sound of her voice; nor my father either. They are all dead, I suppose. I have no relations. I believe I am what's called a ward in Chancery. Nobody seems to care twopence about me, except Mr. Grimmall, and he don't take any trouble, so when I leave school I don't quite know what I shall do, and I leave at Midsummer."

"Mr. Grimmall! Who is he?"

"Oh, he's my grandfather's lawyer, and they say he acts for the court, whatever that means, looks after the property and after me like a sort of guardian,

appointed, I suppose, by Chancery. He lives close to Bristol, and he asks me to go and see him sometimes for a day or two in the holidays. This Easter he said he should not be at home, so, as I had saved some pocket-money—they don't keep me very short—I thought I would come over and have a look at this place where grandfather lived. I came by train to Dereford, and then over to Sedbury by coach the day before yesterday. I am at a college at Clifton."

"May I ask your name?" I interposed.

"Harling is my name," he answered.

"And your grandfather's?"

"Shawburton was his name, and the house seems to be only known in these parts as 'Old Shawburton's.' I had a great deal of trouble to find it, and only did so by mentioning his name. That's all I knew, for I have been kept very much in the dark as to the whole business; but I don't mean to stand it any longer, I am a man now, and I am determined to find out a little for myself. When I mentioned my grandfather's name, they said: 'Oh yes, you mean the tumbledown old place up in the hills yonder, the place that's haunted, and where the horrid noises are heard.'"

"Whom do you say you asked? Who told you this?"

"Oh, several people. First, the landlord of the little inn near Sedbury where I am lodging. He directed me to it first, and then a man down in the road—a farmer's man—he pointed out where I should find it among the trees, for you can't see it, you know, from anywhere, till you are close upon it. But he said if I didn't want to be frightened to death I'd better not go near the place after dark. It was all quiet by day, but, directly night came on, the noises always began if anybody went near the place alone. Oh, I do so want to find out what it all means," cried the young fellow, suddenly stopping and wringing his hands. "I know there is something to be found out, and by me, if I only knew how to set about it. I am sure I should not feel as I do very often if I hadn't something to do with it. Every now and then, sir," he continued, resuming his walk more rapidly, and looking very strangely at me, "every now and then I feel drawn to the place. I have done so for a year past, and this Easter I determined to come and see it, and now I am here I don't know what to do. My courage seems to fail me."

There was something very pitiful in the

way the lad thus outlined his apparent connection with this mysterious abode. He was so evidently in earnest that his words carried conviction of their truth, despite any doubts his behaviour might have suggested as to his sanity.

"The house is in Chancery, then, I imagine, as well as you," I said. "That will account for its dilapidated state. Do you propose going to look over it? Who has the keys?"

"Oh, I don't think I dare go into it," he continued, with an access of the terrified look which constantly overspread his face. "I couldn't alone. Besides, the keys—I never thought of the keys. I suppose Mr. Grimmall has them. How stupid of me!"

"If you have no relations, as you say, I presume the place belongs to you, or will do so when you are of age?"

"I suppose so," he answered gloomily, "but I don't know. I have heard there is a dispute about it. I mean, the death of some person or other has to be proved. Nobody has ever explained to me how matters stand, and until the last year or so I have never cared to know. Now I have seen the place I am more than ever determined to get at the rights of it. Something tells me I ought and must."

We had walked rapidly a considerable distance along the smooth hill-top, and had now come to where one of the paths began its descent towards Colvern Wells. Twilight had been gradually creeping on, and as we drew under the shadow of the slopes, and some more straggling copse, it became comparatively dark. Suddenly my companion seemed to awake to this fact.

"Stop!" he cried out as he halted. "I am going the wrong way. I must turn back, or I shall lose it altogether across those wild hills. Besides, I dare not go near that house after dark, and I can't avoid doing so if I go across them to Sedbury."

"You had better come this way, then, down into the high-road," I suggested, "and go back by that. It is rather farther, but you can't miss your way then, and the moon will be up within an hour. But we shall have a change in the weather, I fancy," I added. "The wind is rising, and there are some ominous-looking clouds making their appearance. The road will be your best way."

"Thank you—yes, I'll do so. I don't like being out so late in the country."

He hurried forward as he spoke, and again stopped suddenly, saying:

"I suppose I mustn't ask you to walk back a little way with me, sir? I mean along the road until we get past the wood."

I evaded this question, for I was tired, and did not fancy extending my rambles so late.

"I am close to my lodgings now," I said, "and if you come on to them, I can show you a short cut into the road."

He came on in silence, and we soon reached my door. Not wishing to be churlish, and feeling curious to hear a little more about my strange acquaintance, I asked if he would come in and have a glass of beer before starting. He gladly accepted the offer, and in another minute we were in my little sitting-room, where a frugal meal was prepared. Still restless, he, nevertheless, sat down and joined me in it, and in answer to the questions with which I plied him he said, amongst other things, that the landlord of the inn at Sedbury, an elderly man, had told him that Mr. Shawburton was a queer old character, who would sometimes not be seen for months outside his door. He lived there with one old woman-servant as queer as himself. He never let anyone cross his threshold, and what he lived on, or how he lived, or what he did, nobody rightly knew. But in earlier days he had a daughter living with him whom he kept as close a prisoner as he did himself, but at last she disappeared—folks said ran away nearly twenty years ago—broke her bonds as was natural; at any rate, no one ever saw her again.

"That was my mother, I expect," exclaimed the young man vehemently. "And it's about her death, I guess, that the dispute is, and why I was made a ward in Chancery. The landlord said, as far as he knew, when Mr. Shawburton and his old servant left the place, it was locked up and has never been opened since. It is supposed they went to London, where he must have died. At any rate, he never came back, and Mr. Grimnall has always spoken of him to me as being dead, whenever he does speak of him."

"And your father and mother, does Mr. Grimnall ever speak to you of them?" I asked.

"No, he seems to avoid that subject if I bring it up. He always treats me like a child, and tells me not to ask questions. But I mean to ask though, now I'm a man," went on young Mr. Harling with a flash of determination. "I feel I ought to be told all about it." He tossed off the

glass of beer he had in his hand, and then sank back dejectedly in his chair.

Needless to say I became more than ever interested. The lad might not be quite "all there," as it is called, but something was evidently preying on his mind. Sitting there with downcast eyes, and his limp, restless hands now hanging wearily across his knees, he looked a sad picture of youthful dejection. After a considerable silence I was about to speak, when I discovered he had fallen sound asleep. I had not the heart to disturb him, and I crept out of the room with a view to consulting my landlady. She was in her kitchen, and very briefly telling her how I had met the lad, asked if she knew anything about Old Shawburton's. The question at once loosened her tongue, but she threw no more light upon the subject than the young man had done.

"Well," I said, "the poor young chap seems dead beat, what with worry of mind and fatigue. It's getting very late, and there is going to be wild weather. I don't like his having to walk to Sedbury to-night in the state he is, it's nearly seven miles. Could you give him a bed?"

"Yes, surely, sir," she replied, "if you think he's a safe customer."

"Oh, he's safe enough, I'll guarantee; there's no harm in him, he won't run off with the spoons."

The end of this was that after gently waking the lad, and telling him the arrangement I proposed, he eagerly fell into it, and I left him soon after ten o'clock alone in a snug, clean, little bedroom at the back of the cottage on the ground-floor. An hour later, and by the time the full moon was beginning to light up the wild scurrying clouds, and to peep out "pale in her anger" at intervals between them, the few inmates of the little lodging-house appeared to be sound asleep, into which state I also fell before long, despite the wind now howling down the chimney and wrangling with the window-sashes.

"Sir, sir, would you please to get up at once!" Such were the words which aroused me the next morning, as the landlady stood tapping at the bedroom-door. "He's gone, sir, he's gone!" she continued, "and he ain't never slept in his bed, and I'm sure I only hope he's gone away empty-handed."

A rapid investigation showed this statement to be true, whilst it also confirmed the good woman's hope. The young man was

nowhere to be found, but nothing besides himself was missing. He must have simply unbolted the outer door, close to which his own opened, and had departed before the house was astir. His room remained just as it was when he was left alone in it, and although the bed had not been slept in, he had evidently been lying down on the outside of it; and there lingered in the apartment a faint odour of that strange-smelling tobacco of his; was there a flavour of opium about it?

"Well," said I, "we must suppose he waited till daylight, and then being unable to sleep, and growing impatient, he started off home; but it's strange behaviour. I'll walk over to Sedbury after breakfast, if the weather will let me, and see if I can discover anything more about him; I am somehow convinced there is a method in the lad's madness, if mad he be."

With this intention, after swallowing a hasty meal, I was soon on my way up the slopes. The wind had calmed down, the sun was shining brightly. I had hardly gone a hundred yards round the first bend or zigzag of the path, ere, what should I behold but the prostrate form of the young fellow among the brambles and undergrowth skirting the way! He was lying face downwards, and his grey suit was besmirched with the wet soil, whilst his cane and soft wide-awake, crumpled and battered, lay close beside him. Alarmed and amazed, and fully expecting to find him insensible, I hurried up only to discover him trembling and shivering with cold or fright, or both. As I raised him he looked at me at first with dazed and stupefied eyes, like a man coming out of "the fierce vexation of a dream." But, recognising me the next moment, he seized my hand, and appeared a little reassured. Still trembling and holding me tight, he struggled to his feet, and looked round in a vague, bewildered manner. Without putting many questions to him then, I suggested that we had better return to my quarters, and in ten minutes more we were again seated in the little sitting-room much as we had been the previous evening, barring his damp and dishevelled state. He looked, however, calmer now, and met my glance less nervously. He spoke, too, with a steadier voice, and with the air of a man whose mind had been relieved from some heavy weight. Once again, too, I found myself naturally plying him with questions, in reply to which, by degrees, I elicited from him the following extra-

ordinary statement. How much of it, if any, was actually true will never be known, but that he sincerely believed he had passed through the strange experience he related, I as sincerely believe.

When left alone, he told me, he threw himself on the bed without undressing; the curious longing which he had had of late to probe this matter to its depths, taking possession of him with renewed force. He had a strong desire, he said, in spite of his misgivings, and my hospitality, to venture forth into the night; to court these mysterious sounds, and see if he could learn anything from them. After lying still for a while revolving what to do, he suddenly made up his mind. He became inspired with an unusual courage—yes, he would go out; he would go and listen in the dead of the night to these noises for himself. Already the boisterous elements filled his ears with a turmoil of sounds. Already he fancied they had a meaning in them; the wind wailed, as if calling upon him to act; and when hesitation filled his mind, it roared and thundered as if in reproof. To him the rising and falling of the tempest was like the despair alternating with the anger of a human being. Then he rose, and finding no difficulty in creeping out of the house, he boldly sought the solitude of the hills. A thing he could no more have contemplated doing, he urged, an hour or two before, than he could have flown.

In a little while he found his way to the ridge overlooking the dell; it seemed to him that he had reached it without walking—reached the very spot where we first met. The moon, though not visible, illumined the heavens sufficiently to enable him to see plainly where he was. Indifferent to the storm, and, indeed, to anything but the purpose he had in view, which, as far as I could glean from his wild story, was now to penetrate and search the house, for what he hardly knew, he began to make his descent towards it by a path amidst the scattered trees fringing the slope. Ere long he arrived at the dilapidated paling. Scrambling over this, in a moment he had his hand on the outside shutter of a low back window. Directly he touched it he declared the moaning of the wind, which had grown more human in its tone with every step he made towards the house, faded into a whisper, as if some one were speaking to him from within. No words at first were audible, but as he listened they seemed to shape themselves into an

oft-repeated sentences, yet still so faint as to be unintelligible. Burning to know its meaning, he forced the shutter, which yielded and fell back. The moon suddenly glittered on the cobweb-covered glass, as she shot a ray straight down into the lonely dell. Why he should remember such a trivial detail as the cobwebs, he said he could not explain, but they appeared to cut the light up into a thousand glittering stars, which all but blinded him as he tried to push the window up. At first it would not move, but presently it fell in with a crash, and in another moment he stood within that strange, deserted tenement.

Except for certain dark corners and recesses, the moonbeams which found their way in through the open window revealed a long, low room, scantily furnished, extending across the whole building. On the walls hung strange obscure forms as of animals and of birds, some with hideously grimacing heads and faces protruding, others as if they were flattened and pressed close against the wainscot. From the ceiling were suspended more uncouth shapes that looked like skeletons, which swayed to and fro dismally, as if endowed with life. Many of these, or parts of them, appeared to have fallen, for the floor was strewn here and there with bones. But he disregarded the weird aspect of the apartment; at least, it did not affect his purpose, for, once within the place, he stood still and listened.

"Now I dare say you won't believe me, sir," he went on, "but in a moment I distinctly heard a soft, low, woman's voice whisper these words: 'Search the shed, and give me rest. Search the shed, search the shed!' They were thrice repeated, and then nothing was to be heard save the continued roaring of the wind, listen though I did for many minutes with all my ears. After this my former fears seemed to overcome me; again my teeth chattered, and I shook from head to foot; I felt as if I could not move, as if I was pinned to the floor. I don't know how long I stood there; my whole desire then was to get out of the room. I seemed to have no other thought, just as before I had no thought but how to get into it. I had learned all I could—all that it was necessary for me to know. How I escaped from the hateful place—how I got back to where you found me, I have no recollection; in fact, I know nothing more. But that voice was the voice of my mother—I feel sure of it. I seemed to recognise it

and I shall search the shed," he added determinately. "Oh, sir, do help me!"

Passing over details, I walked back that afternoon with this strange witless youth to Sedbury by the road, and that night I wrote a long letter to Mr. Grimnall, whose address he gave me, explaining all that had happened, and suggesting to that eminent solicitor that the lad was hardly in a fit state of mind to be left to himself. Further, I ventured to say, that if there were any foundation for Mr. Harling's account of his connection with the former occupant of the deserted house, it might be well to examine the premises closely. My own opinion was from the first that there was a method in the boy's madness, otherwise I should not have been so interested in him, and I expressed as much to Mr. Grimnall. I did not exactly credit his account of his midnight adventure in the lonely dell, much less that part of it, of course, touching the whispered sentence. He had simply had a nightmare, a bad dream, perhaps a half-waking one, due in part to some strong narcotic or opiate which he mixed with his tobacco, and I thought that, stupefied and delirious, he had wandered out of my lodgings early in the morning on to the hillside, and had there fallen down in some sort of fit or state of coma where I found him. I did not believe he had gone a yard farther.

Before leaving him at Sedbury I made him promise to take no steps in the business until I should hear from Mr. Grimnall; I, on my part, promising to do all in my power to help him to clear up the mystery.

The following day, which brought with it a renewal of the windy, tempestuous weather, I strolled over to the ridge above the old house just to see whether the window by which the lad stated he had effected an entrance exhibited any proof of his having done so. Somewhat to my surprise, sure enough, it was wide open, and the sash apparently smashed in. To descend into the hollow, which now under a leaden sky wore a truly gloomy and forbidding aspect, and to take a peep into that weird room for myself, was but natural; so down I went, and in a few minutes I, too, stood looking into it. Certainly it bore out exactly what the young man had described.

Apparently it had been used as a sort of museum of natural history, skins of animals and birds, many stuffed, grimly looking down from their shelves, with the skeletons hanging from the ceilings and

still swaying with the wind. All this was true enough, and I could easily believe that a distempered imagination would, under the fitful gleams of moonlight, readily conjure up all sorts of sounds and sights. After peering about for some time in the gloom, and not feeling tempted then to carry my investigations much farther, I beat a retreat, rather puzzled again as to how much of the boy's statement could be relied on as fact. The turbulent wind might have torn open the shutter, and burst in the sash, certainly, but it was rather a curious coincidence that it should have done so at that particular time.

For two days nothing happened; but on the morning of the third, which was wet and gloomy, a chaise stopped at my door, and from it an old gentleman alighted, asking for me. This was Mr. Grimnall himself, a personage as grim of aspect as of name. A sallow face, surmounted by a crop of thick, iron-grey hair, with short whiskers and bushy eyebrows to match; dark eyes, a grave expression, a hesitating, harsh voice—all these points forced themselves upon my attention, and accounted for the absence of confidence between the solicitor and his young client. A word or two brought us immediately to the business in hand.

"I thought it better," began Mr. Grimnall, "to come over and see you; and, to tell you the truth, your letter was a great relief, for there was some uncertainty as to young Harling's whereabouts, and we are greatly obliged to you for writing. In plain words, this stupid boy has left his school, or local college, without letting the authorities know where he was going. With your letter I received one from the master enquiring if he was with me. Had you not written I should have been most anxious; as it is, I am on my way to fetch him back, but I thought I would call and thank you. I am familiar with this neighbourhood, and am just now staying at no great distance, and my absence from home it is, which has prevented an earlier acknowledgment of your letter. Your reference to his family affairs, of which he has spoken to you, and the extraordinary account he gave you of a visit he is supposed to have paid to his old grandfather's house, with your suggestion that some investigation would be desirable, oblige me to say a word on the subject. You cannot imagine there is any truth in his adventure. At the same time we would gladly catch at any clue which

might lead us to a proof of his mother's death. Still, as a reasoning being, I am not going to suppose we shall arrive at it by supernatural agency. You cannot believe that, sir, any more than myself?"

"No, truly," I acquiesced; "but without intruding upon private matters, I would ask whether the outline of Mr. Shawburton's affairs, as indicated by his grandson and current in the neighbourhood, is correct, and if so, whether that ramshackle old house has been completely overhauled?"

"Most assuredly it was thoroughly searched some years ago," answered Mr. Grimnall, "by myself and my clerk, but I am not so sure about the outhouses and shed; and it is just that point which, in spite of the absurdity of the thing, caught my attention. Shawburton was an eccentric old man, and as you have kindly taken an interest in the subject, I had better tell you the bare facts.

"He started in life as a doctor, set up in practice in Bristol, his native city; but unexpectedly inheriting a handsome fortune, he confined himself to the scientific side of his profession; was a diligent student of natural history, ornithology, comparative anatomy, and the rest of it. He married, but his happiness was short-lived, and soon after his wife's death, which happened at the birth of their only child—a girl—he purchased the small tenement which had long stood unoccupied in these hills. He added to it, and lived there the life of a recluse, devoting himself more than ever to his scientific pursuits. An elderly woman-servant and a nurse for the baby were the only other occupants. As the latter grew up, the nurse was discharged; he educated his child himself, and she grew to woman's estate, literally without having seen more of the world than is visible from the ridge of these hills. Naturally at last she rebelled, ran away, and got married to a young scamp of a shopman at Great Colvern by the name of Harling, who had his eye on my old client's purse. But he reckoned without his host—the old man could not be conciliated. Harling set up in business for himself in the town, but soon came to his wits' end, failed, and died suddenly, when his boy was three years old. The poor woman was left penniless; her father refused to take her back—refused to do anything more than provide for her child, with whom, after lengthened negotiations, which I conducted, she consented to part, and he was

placed in an infant-school at Bristol. After repeated applications to her father for assistance she, too, disappeared, and has never since been heard of. What became of her is a mystery. Consequently we have never been able to prove her death. Shawburton grew more and more eccentric as years went on; he shut himself up entirely, never went out, or his old servant either, and no one was allowed to enter the house. He probably pursued his scientific fads to the end, for I ascertained he had a large quantity of chemicals sent to him from Bristol, and amongst other curious things an enormous roll of sheet-lead.

"The old man's property—a very pretty one—was in the Three per Cents., and when he first withdrew from the world he gave me a power of attorney to receive the dividends and pay them into his Bristol bank. I also managed what other trifles of business had to be done for him—such as looking after his grandson, and his eventual schooling, etc., of which I gave him by letter a bi-annual report, and which he duly acknowledged by two lines, and beyond this I do not believe he had any concern with the post whatever. I should also say that when he married nearly forty years ago, I drew his will, by which he bequeathed everything to his wife, and at her death to her children. At her death, therefore, his baby-daughter became his heir, and, as Mrs. Harling, should have inherited on the decease of the old man; but we couldn't find her. As I have told you, she was never seen after her boy was taken away from her, fully four years before her father departed this life."

"Under what circumstances did he die?" I here enquired.

Mr. Grimnall resumed:

"Under circumstances which complicated matters greatly. To my intense surprise, I one day received a letter from him saying that he desired to make a fresh will, that he was coming into Bristol to see me for the purpose, and that he was coming three days on. But he did not come in three, in six, or in nine days, and for a good reason—he was lying dying at Dereford, to which place he had gone in the carrier's cart from Colvern, to catch the coach for Bristol; there was no railway in those days. He had locked up his house, having two days previously packed off his old woman-servant to London, where we lost all trace of her. Well, by the time I reached Dereford, whither I

was summoned by the old man's request when he was first taken ill there at an obscure inn, he was dead. You can hardly conceive, therefore, a more difficult state of affairs to deal with. By his will he had made me and his wife his executors, and of course I was the only surviving one. My first step was to find Mrs. Harling, and I naturally expected to gain some information about her at her father's house. I went over, and then for the first time learned that the house was shut up—empty, deserted! That was twelve years ago; the boy was then about six.

"There was nothing left for us but to throw the case into Chancery. I was appointed by the court guardian of the child, etc., and at the expiration of seven years after Mrs. Harling's disappearance, my powers were renewed. The proof of her death would be satisfactory from the mere sentimental point of view, though I am not a man of much sentiment myself, and it is rather tiresome to find it developing in this youngster. Up to about a year ago he was a commonplace sort of lad enough, but since then the masters tell me he has strangely altered, grown very obstinate and self-willed, and, they say, stupid. He has been at constant odds with them, especially about smoking. I shall be glad when he is off my hands."

"Meanwhile," I suggested, "would there be any objection to our humouring him in the matter of searching the shed? One has heard of curious discoveries made through wild dreams or fancies. It is said that 'in all countries there is a vague belief in the second-sight, conceded both to the insane and to those who are on the threshold of death.' Perhaps I hold this belief, and as it seems to me the lad is verging on the first of these two conditions, it might be wise to let what is called common-sense concede something to superstition."

A sardonic smile crossed Mr. Grimnall's face as he replied: "Oh, by all means. As I have said, I caught at the idea that the outhouse might not have been examined, and although it is rather late in the day to begin a re-investigation, I am quite willing. The fact is, I may have been lukewarm and dilatory in the business. It gave me a great deal of unprofitable trouble at the outset, and one forgets how time flies, and how boys grow into men."

"Good," said I. "You are on your way to Sedbury then to look up young

Mr. Harling; therefore, suppose you bring him back here, and let us all three undertake the exploration together."

Once more, to pass over details, my project was carried out in a few hours. Beneath a lowering sky and in a drizzling rain we three approached the obscure little domain, this time from the road, by the pathway through the copse. The lad led the way eagerly, but in silence, round to the dilapidated outhouse or shed. He was perfectly cool and collected, the courage of that dreamlike state of exaltation, which he described as possessing him when he paid his visit to the spot, having returned. He took the lead with the air of one well-knowing what he was about. He felt himself, he told me afterwards, unconsciously guided. The much-decayed door was only secured by a rusty padlock, the hasp of which yielded to a slight wrench. The place was a mere hovel or tool-house, built of weather-boarding, the soundest part seeming to be the roof. It might well have been passed over in any previous examination of the premises, as not likely to yield any revelation of importance concerning the owner. Light found no access into it except through the open doorway. Dust, mildew, and cobwebs lay thick on everything, and a faint, musty smell assailed the nostrils. Few words were spoken. By common consent, as it seemed, Mr. Grimnall and myself left everything to Harling. He appeared to have no doubt what to do. Occupying a large space of the interior stood a kind of solid carpenter's bench, or enormous rough wooden chest. The light fell straight down upon the flat top, which was about the only space in the place unencumbered with a litter of small boxes, broken baskets, tools, mouldy, discoloured papers, and worm-eaten nondescript objects. After looking around him for a minute, as if for an implement available for his purpose, the lad found a rusty chisel and mallet, lying in a corner with other carpenter's tools; and without hesitation proceeded to prise up the top of the bench. It offered considerable resistance, but presently it slid aside, being fitted accurately to the chest, and only held tight by the incrustation of the dust of years. The interior thus partially revealed to Harling, but invisible to us standing near the doorway, produced this startling exclamation from him: "I knew it; I knew it was her voice, and here she lies, found by me as promised. Yes, mother, I will give you rest!"

Mr. Grimnall and I stepped forward, and, gazing into the aperture, dimly beheld beneath a pane of glass a human face. Startled and aghast we drew back for a moment, looking uncertainly at each other, whilst Harling bent his head reverently close down over his discovery.

I do not pretend to describe all that followed. The lawyer and myself had not expected anything so startling as this, and how we next went to work to assure ourselves that our eyes were not deceiving us, matters not. In the end we verified the fact that the bench or chest contained the embalmed remains of Mrs. Harling, enclosed and hermetically sealed in a roughly-made leaden coffin, with a pane of glass let in over the head so as to show the face, which, strangely well preserved, and seen by the dim light, looked terribly life-like. Grimnall recognised her after but little examination, and his evidence in connection with the surrounding circumstances was, after much circumlocution, accepted by the Court of Chancery as proof of her death.

But when the poor woman had returned to her father's house; how or why this eccentric method of dealing with all that was mortal of her had been resorted to; when or how she died, there was no direct evidence to show, and we never discovered any. It was not difficult, however, to imagine. The solitary and secluded life of old Shawburton, together with his scientific propensities and the peculiarities of his character, would account for all. Doubtless after a while, and unknown to anyone save his old servant, he had taken his daughter back and thenceforth kept her as close a prisoner as himself. There was no reason for suspecting any foul play. Her death probably arose from natural causes, which, as a medical man, her father could deal with, and, when it occurred, he simply exercised upon her remains the skill he had displayed in preserving and embalming certain specimens of the dumb portion of creation.

That her spirit, however, in some wise influenced the mind of her son seems pretty clear to me after my experience of him. But into this question I do not go. With the discovery, and after his mother's body had been reverently laid in the little country churchyard of Colvern Wells, the cloud lifted from the lad's brain, and I have reason to know that he has not apparently inherited any of the eccentricities of his grandfather.

Of course the affair made some stir in the

neighbourhood; various garbled accounts of it were spread far and wide, but whilst the noises attributed to the lonely house were held to have been sufficiently accounted for by the presence of the embalmed remains in the shed, their eventual disposal in a fitting resting-place naturally quieted the troubled spirit, and no one was surprised thenceforth at the place ceasing to be haunted.

I revisited the hills a few years afterwards, when "Old Shawburton's" itself even had disappeared.

AMONG THE HILLS.

I.

SOMEWHERE in South Germany, on the borders of three different countries, the railway-lines converge at a station which would in England be an important junction, but which there is a humble erection, content with one platform. The long-suffering passengers, when they alight, have to make their way with their baggage across the metals, in front of snorting engines and behind heavily-laden trucks, unless, indeed, they are fortunate enough to belong to the infrequent trains which draw up at the platform itself.

One burning day in August, the passengers were waiting with extraordinary patience for leave to remount into the carriages which they could plainly see before their longing eyes in inviting nearness, with only two railway-lines and a luggage-truck between them. There was very little shade upon the platform, but a young lady had taken advantage of the small amount thrown by a projecting ledge, and was seated upon her box calmly surveying the scene before her.

No one could for an instant have mistaken her nationality; long before her fellow-passengers had come near enough to see the clear-cut features and steady blue eyes, they had shrugged their shoulders over the fact that she was an unmistakable Englishwoman.

She was quite young—probably not more than twenty—and quite alone, yet the peculiarities of her position did not affect her in the least, for she was brooding over her secret wrongs, and wondering why she had been turned out of the train which the officials had acknowledged was the one in which she was to proceed. She had tried to insist upon remaining in her

shelter, but had been compelled to descend, under the threat of being ignominiously hauled out.

The affair had by no means disconcerted her; she endured the accidents of life with singular equanimity. Even her latest exploit had not one whit ruffled her composure, although the victim of it was still casting contemptuous glances at her from the other end of the platform.

He was a well-looking, but somewhat corpulent major, whose undress uniform, resembling, as it did, the costume of the railway officials, had induced the young lady to consult him on some point connected with her recent wrongs. His natural indignation, expressed by the stiff manner in which he drew his heels together and saluted the culprit, had not been soothed by the young lady's calm explanation, in distinct if ungrammatical German, that it was very strange, she was very sorry, but he was so exactly like a guard that she could not help the mistake.

Rosalind Tracy's little stock of patience was slowly ebbing, for the sun was growing hotter, and the platform dustier, every moment, when the small remnant was put to a fresh trial. A door suddenly opened, and a fierce German official flew out something after the fashion of a jack-in-the-box.

"Not so near the edge," he thundered to Rosalind, who started to her feet, not knowing whether she was in imminent danger from a lunatic. After eyeing him over for a moment, she sat down again, turning her back upon the line, and thus obeying his mandate.

"Move your box too," went on the inexorable official in similar tones; but this was too much.

"My good man," said the young lady, rising and closing her sunshade as if she were preparing for battle, "I am in no danger. I am not near the edge of the platform. I will not budge an inch," this with extreme clearness of articulation; "neither will I move my box. You had better go away, for I think you a singularly uncivil and disagreeable specimen of an uncivil and disagreeable class."

Her words being English would have had little effect, but her tone being extremely gentle and quiet, produced the result she desired, for the official imagined that she was offering an apology for her conduct, and retired as suddenly as he had appeared.

"I think," she said very sweetly to the

fellow-passenger who happened to be next her when they had all been allowed to climb into their carriages again; "I think the German railway officials ought to be sent to England for a time."

As her neighbour chanced to be the officer she had already offended, he only glowered more fiercely than before, not vouchsafing any answer because he could find none sufficiently crushing.

But if he would not talk to his fellow-traveller, everyone else would. The elderly lady eating cherries was equally surprised and delighted to find from Rosalind's account that such fruit grew also in England. The old, smiling German professor took quite a fatherly interest in the route Rosalind was following, and in the means by which she was to reach her journey's end. His interest reached to the pitch of excitement when he found that a carriage was to meet her at Niederhofen, in which she was to travel to her destination among the hills.

"Remember," he cried in a perfect fever, "only two thalers for Trinkgeld!"

These were the last words Rosalind heard as the train moved out of the station, leaving her and her box alone upon the platform. The advice, excellent as it was, was superfluous, for when, after waving an adieu to the train in general, and her stout friend in particular, she proceeded to search for her conveyance, she found nothing but a yellow-bodied "post-wagon," with two thin, wiry little horses fastened to the coach by an ingenious harness of leather and rope. The driver, who seemed to combine the offices of guard and coachman, was dressed in a smart light blue uniform, and wore the royal arms upon his cap.

Rosalind had profited sufficiently by her former mistake to be cautious in addressing him, and whilst she hesitated, her difficulties were suddenly solved for her by an English voice at her side:

"Excuse me, but you are surely English, and are going to Oberhofen?"

"You are quite right," was the reply, "although," the young lady added to herself, "I don't know how you guessed either fact."

Some men would have been abashed at the girl's coolness, and at the steady, critical look of her blue eyes, but Claude Errol was only spurred on to further exertion by the consciousness that the face which looked up at him was young and singularly pretty, and that here was an excellent opportunity

for displaying his command over the German language.

"My uncle and I are going to Oberhofen in the diligence, and will make it all right with the coachman."

Whereupon he poured forth a long story in voluble North German, which the official received quite heedlessly, standing at some distance from Mr. Errol, and occasionally flicking off with his whip a more than usually obtrusive piece of dust from the harness. His composure was not altogether assumed. Claude's German was about as intelligible to him as Hebrew, and although he was aware that the young Englishman was volubly explaining and expostulating, he took no pains to understand the matter in hand, for he considered an attitude of explanation and expostulation as the normal condition of that extraordinary race.

"It is all right, I have settled it," said Errol triumphantly. "We had taken the two box-seats, now you are to have one, and either my uncle or I will go inside."

Rosalind thanked him, without, however, expressing in her words either the gratitude or admiration which he felt to be his due. Then she suddenly turned to an older man who had been standing in the background, and asked him with a certain graceful air of confidential intimacy:

"Do you really think this will be my best way of reaching Oberhofen?"

The man she addressed started a little. He was not much accustomed to find women turn from his handsome, smiling, self-satisfied nephew to himself, but he soon recovered himself, and answered her question; no human being had ever turned to Arnold Eyre for help, and received less than he demanded, for the giver always offered full measure, pressed down, and running over.

"I believe it is your only means of getting there," he made reply, in a tone which formed a strange contrast with the younger man's bearing. "It is more than fifteen miles from here, and it is impossible to obtain a carriage."

"But I really don't like to take your place, and I can easily go inside."

"We are delighted to give it up to you. Pray say no more about it."

He used the first person plural, but Rosalind noticed that it was he who got inside, whilst Claude helped her up to the elevated perch which formed an enlarged coach-box. Before she could take her seat, however, she was startled by a sudden

scream of despair. A stout, spectacled German, who had been bidding an affectionate good-bye to a large circle of acquaintances, suddenly darted forwards and snatched hold of Miss Tracy's dress.

"Ach, meine Blumen!" he cried, as soon as his horror could find words.

And then Rosalind discovered the cause of his terror in a little square brown-paper parcel which he had placed on the box, and which he had feared she might crush. These having been rescued from danger, his wife placed in the inside of the coach, and he having climbed to Rosalind's side, he found words to express his sorrow for having startled her, apologies which were graciously received by Rosalind, but taken a little sulkily by Mr. Errol, who kept up a running commentary in English on the German's excuses.

At last the coachman climbed to the foot-board, where he sat with his feet dangling close to the horses' hind legs, and the coach started at a trot up the valley. The incline was gentle, for the river flowed steadily to meet them at about ten feet below their road. There was little to be seen but the fields in the valley, which gradually narrowed as they went on, the pastures at the foot of the mountains on the other side, and the rugged peaks above, with a little sparse snow scattered here and there upon the rocky surface. Sometimes as the road wound in and out, the travellers caught a glimpse of a couple of hamlets far up the valley, looking as if the wooden houses and churches of a toy village had been dropped by some giant child at his play. The German beside Rosalind was in ecstasies, and at every bit of steep ascent which slackened the horses' pace he took considerable trouble to assure his wife, who put her head out of window to listen to his words, that the view was lovely, the air heavenly in its freshness, and that he was perfectly happy, and he would wind up these oft-repeated statements by an outburst of sentiment.

"I only wish, my beloved, that there was room here for thee also."

It was partly to drown Mr. Errol's muttered and uncomplimentary comments on this display of conjugal devotion that Rosalind turned to the speaker and said in her best German:

"I am very sorry I nearly crushed your flowers; but really you should not do up flowers so as to look like——" She paused for a simile.

"Mouse-traps!" suggested the German

in excellent English, with a merry smile and a certain gleam of triumph in his eyes as he glanced past Rosalind at the Englishman beyond her. "Well, no, perhaps not."

Rosalind thought of giving him a little advice as to the really best method of carrying flowers, but then, taking a silent survey of his appearance, she decided he was too old to learn. She never doubted her own capacity for teaching. Indeed, the most superficial observer would have seen that she came from a home where her excellent theories concerning life and its problems had never been put to the cruel test of experience.

"Is not this nice?" she said, turning to Claude, her face bright from the cooling mountain breeze which swept down the valley, and her eyes bright with a light which was no reflected sunshine. "Feel how delicious the wind is, and look at the glitter on the snow!"

"The horses are the most miserable screws I ever saw," grumbled the young man.

"But think how much we should miss if we went faster. Look, I can see a wild strawberry on the bank, and there is an old man going in at his cottage door; and see, there, his grandson running out to meet him."

"I don't see much to admire in the couple, I must say," Claude answered with perhaps just a shade of contempt in his voice. "They are neither handsome nor presumably clean."

The girl he addressed did not reply to him, she did not even deign to look at him, but directed all the rest of her conversation to her other companion.

"She has a morbid taste for age, ugliness, and infirmity," yawned young Errol to himself with a complacent sense that no one could consider him as a concrete illustration of any of these terms.

Meanwhile within the coach, which was hot and closely packed with marketwomen and their baskets, Mr. Eyre consoled himself with the thought that the two young people up above were thoroughly enjoying themselves.

II.

The arrival of the coach at Oberhofen has been so unfortunately timed by the Government, whose mails it carries, that its daily rattle over the stones does not arouse a proper degree of interest, or secure a fair amount of attention. At eight o'clock

every German in the place—and the place is full of Germans—is engaged in ordering, eating, or digesting his supper, and no light or frivolous amusement is allowed by him to interfere with the solemn duties of his life. Consequently the coach is not received by an excited and admiring crowd, although on this particular evening one lady was awaiting its arrival with considerable interest, which was fully reciprocated by the English girl on the coach-box. She smiled and nodded, and nodded and smiled, alternately, whilst all the time she kept up a brisk conversation with her German friend, who was much interested, as all kindly Germans are, in her family history, and the story of her aunt Mary, with whom she was going to spend a month at Oberhofen. He was stout and elderly, but he managed to climb down from his perch and help her after him, before Claude had found his knapsack and fishing-rod and remembered her existence.

It was a pleasant sight, both he and Arnold Eyre thought, to see how the faces of the two women brightened as they clasped hands.

"My dear child, I am sorry there was no carriage to meet you, but the people here have no consciences, or if they have any they give them leave of absence during the season, for they are always promising what they cannot perform. I find old Vogel, our landlord, had solemnly undertaken to provide four people with carriages this afternoon, and had then sent out the only one he possessed to carry in the hay-harvest. I hope you did not have an uncomfortable drive."

"Oh no, not a bit; somebody gave up," Rosalind made answer; then suddenly interrupting herself: "But I forgot something." As she spoke she started off at a quick walk in pursuit of her fellow-travellers, who were already dispersing to their homes. Arnold Eyre turned at the sound of her hurrying feet, so different from the clattering walk of the peasants, or the military tread of the male visitors at Oberhofen.

"Oh, I beg your pardon," an eager voice said, as she came up with him, "but I quite forgot to thank you for giving up your place to me—it was very good of you, and I felt all the while that if I had not gone inside, your nephew ought to have done it, for he is the younger."

She spoke in her usual clear accents, heedless whether or not she should be overheard, or, perhaps, wishful that her

words should reach Mr. Errol's ears. As he went on his way, apparently without noticing or hearing them, he indulged in a small, contemptuous smile at the young lady's attempt to make herself of importance.

"I was delighted to give up my place to you," said Arnold, smiling down kindly on her eagerness, and a little amused at her rebuke. "I hope you both enjoyed your drive."

On which, Rosalind fell to wondering, with feminine perversity, whether she might not have enjoyed the society of the uncle more than that of the nephew.

It was a question she often had occasion to ask herself during the following days, for the four English people were naturally drawn together by the bond of a common nationality, and still more of a common language, and in the excursions they made together the young lady found herself frequently and naturally the companion of the young gentleman, whilst Mr. Eyre helped Mrs. Gilmore up and down steep paths, over mountain brooks, and into the shadiest nooks on the hillside.

"Poor Mr. Eyre! he is so kind and attentive," she often said to her niece. "Poor Mr. Eyre!" Rosalind had got used to the epithet, and though she had at first resented its use, she had learnt to tolerate it since she had heard his story—the story of a treachery once freely forgiven and forgotten by him, only to be renewed when its repetition crushed him with overwhelming force. His wife had long been in her grave, but the result of her misdoing was not laid with her in that quiet cemetery where he had stood by her coffin. An experience, which would have made many men distrustful of the world and cynical concerning human nature, had only given Arnold a profound mistrust of himself and an abiding sense that the happiness he had missed through life was a happiness he had never deserved. Not that he ever posed as a melancholy hero pursued by a fatal destiny; on the contrary, he had been eager to seize and hold any fragment of gladness which came in his way. Rosalind liked to tell him any story about her journey and its adventures, for his face suddenly changed its character, and the light of honest laughter lit up his kind, sad, grey eyes.

Perhaps it was the result of finding her little jests so well received and her smiles so welcome; perhaps it was the natural perversity of human nature which resented the compulsory nature of her companion-

ship with the younger man; or perhaps it was a subtler unconscious joy in bringing back happiness to the heart where it had so long been a stranger—but whatever were Rosalind's motives she found very soon that she preferred Arnold's society to Claude's, and she would reckon up at the end of the day, in the most simple and innocent triumph imaginable, how many times she had been able to talk to him, and how often she had made him laugh.

Breakfast was over at the Golden Eagle. The comfortless room, with its long tables covered with oilcloth, looked more miserable than usual from the half emptied coffee-cups and scattered remnants of bread-and-honey. A few Germans were smoking, the women were knitting, and the atmosphere was growing every minute more insupportable from the odour of tobacco and want of ventilation. The resources of the room were soon exhausted: a couple of German newspapers, one of which Errol was reading as he lingered over his breakfast, an engraving of the Emperor, and a list of the hotels in Munich, did not form an enchanting whole. Outside the rain was descending in a gentle shower, which hardly seemed more than a Scotch mist, but which had thoroughly cleared the one street of the village.

"I can bear it no longer," cried Rosalind, as a fifth German lighted his pipe; "rain, hail, and thunder would be better than this; besides, I believe the clouds are lifting."

She walked out of the house into the fresh, moist air without pausing to see whether anyone was following her. Her aunt never looked up from the letter she was writing, and Claude was far too engrossed in his paper to notice her departure; only Arnold Eyre took up a fleecy shawl of Mrs. Gillmore's, and followed the girl out of the room.

"I was afraid you would find it chilly after the close air down there," he said, almost apologising for his presence, when he found her standing under the overhanging balcony which sheltered the steps of the hotel.

She looked up at him with a smile which was at once an unspoken "thank you," and an invitation to stay, and the unconscious expression of feeling seemed to overflow and drown the deliberate one.

The rain gradually ceased falling, and a few peasant-women passed to and fro intent upon some farm-work; on the left a stone monument, such as one may find in

nearly every German village, recorded the names of some of those who had fallen asleep in the midst of a victory they had died to gain, but were never to know or to share.

"I think these monuments show one better than any history what war really is," said Rosalind softly. "When this little village lost ten men, how many more there must have been taken away from their mothers and their homes! How the people here must have waited and watched and prayed for those who were never to come back again!"

Arnold looked at her tenderly, he had not before heard her speak so solemnly, and he never guessed—how should he?—that it was some chance words of his, spoken over-night, which had set her thinking about the obscure rank-and-file of whom the world can of necessity give no history.

"Only, perhaps," she went on in a musing tone, "it is better to die so than to live to grow old among the hills here, and to find life every year more empty and barren of happiness."

She was looking at an old villager—lean, worn, and wrinkled—who was hobbling by, leaning on his thick stick.

Arnold Eyre answered her unspoken thought.

"Life's prizes do seem unequally divided," he began, and then paused—a sudden sense of the contrast between those two who were speaking overcame him. Young, bright, beautiful, happy, and beloved, she seemed hardly to belong to the same order of beings as the grey-haired, prematurely aged man beside her.

"But after all," he went on very gently, and rather lamely, as a man is sure to do when he tries to reduce the theories which rule his life into words which shall explain them to indifferent ears, "when all hope of personal happiness is over, there is always a great deal to live for; things often turn out rightly, and one sees other people happy and enjoying themselves."

She turned away her head with a little sob in her throat, which he took for a laugh at the simplicity of his theory. It was absurd for him to expect that a happy child, eager to take a prominent part in life's drama, should understand the quieter pleasure to be derived from a passive contemplation of the rush and hurry of the stage. But there was no laughter in Rosalind's heart, only a tender pity and a passionate sense of rebellion against the

decree he had inferred, if not openly pronounced—that his life was to be henceforward barren of personal happiness or of any joy but that reflected from richer and fuller lives.

III.

If the number of chapels in any place be taken as a fair test of the religious feeling of the community, the inhabitants of Oberhofen must be amongst the most devout Christians in Europe. Besides a large church in the centre of the village, there are many little chapels scattered here and there about the meadows, and innumerable shrines where the richly-coloured crucifix or saint is protected from the rain by a projecting ledge, whilst the worshipper kneels on a flat stone by the roadside. The largest of these is situated on a hill—the Calvarien-berg—a little distance from the village. A chapel originally stood upon the summit, but this has given place to a highly-coloured and very realistic life-size group representing the scene on Calvary. The steep zig-zags which ascend the hill may have intentionally been made difficult and unattractive with a view of forming a kind of penitential stair for the faithful; but if this was the intention of the designer, it must be owned that the public is unwilling to take advantage of his forethought. Few persons are ever to be met breasting the ascent.

"And they show their sense," cried Mrs. Gillmore, pausing for breath at the corner of one of the zig-zags. "Why did you two ever persuade me to try and get up here? It is not fit for old people to venture upon such perilous enterprises."

"Why, here comes Age itself to contradict your assertion," said Claude Errol, laughing, as a bent figure suddenly appeared at the corner of the zig-zag above them.

She was a very old woman, but she was energetic and cheery, for she was engaged in steering down the incline a small sleigh heavily laden with broken bits of wood, and she was smiling over a task which would have woefully tried most tempers and most backs. Whenever the sleigh could go wrong it did—it stopped dead, it turned over on its side, it ran into the bank, and it showed a perverse desire at the turn of the zig-zag to continue its path straight down to the valley. But its guide displayed neither impatience nor disgust, and, when she passed the strangers,

turned upon them such a beaming face of good-humoured happiness that Rosalind was irresistibly reminded of her talk with Arnold Eyre.

"I wonder where your uncle can be?" she said, turning abruptly to Claude, who was watching with an amused smile the desperate efforts of the old peasant to pilot her convoy round the corner.

"Probably somewhere at the top. Anyhow, he won't lose himself," was the dry answer.

Mr. Errol felt that Miss Tracy's interest was misplaced. But as they finished their ascent, the concern was transferred from her voice to his.

"By Jove! what is he doing?"

Arnold Eyre had taken off his coat, and was endeavouring with a clumsy axe and a not over-skilful arm to break up into pieces an old wooden door which lay upon the ground.

"What a queer fellow he is!" sighed Errol; "and yet, Miss Tracy, his heart is as good as gold."

Rosalind turned away impatiently; this was not the first occasion on which Errol had apologised for or explained his uncle's conduct. Why would everyone persist in imagining that she was incapable of appreciating real greatness of character?

Arnold Eyre stopped his work, but did not lay down his axe.

"Did you meet the old lady dragging down her supply of firewood? She has the priest's permission to carry away this old door, and I found her tapping at it with a hammer and chisel with a view to breaking it up before Christmas."

"It was a pity to rob her of her amusement," said Claude a little sulkily.

He heard footsteps approaching, and who could tell which of his eligible acquaintance might find him and his uncle in this strange situation?

But it was only the old woman, who reappeared smiling, with her empty sleigh, and whose smiles widened into positive laughter as she watched the well-intentioned but misdirected energies of the English gentleman, who never paused except to make a joke in unintelligible German, but with an easily-understood smile.

Mrs. Gillmore watched him with ill-concealed anxiety, lest he should slice off his foot or his leg in one of his unpractised strokes.

Claude looked on divided between anger

and contempt, whilst Rosalind's thoughts were less easy to determine, for she never turned her eyes from the axe which scattered the chips on to her gown and over her head.

When the work was done she crossed to where Claude was standing apart.

"Now," she said in her quick, rather commanding tones, "you had better put the wood on the sleigh and drag it down the hill."

At the manifest absurdity of this proposition everyone laughed aloud, and the old woman, who had just understood Eyre's demand for a trinkgeld, laughed loudest of all, but there was no smile on Rosalind's face, and no merriment in her heart.

IV.

It was a fête-day in the village—a new bowling-green and drinking-saloon were to be opened, and the people of the surrounding country, to whom Oberhofen represented all the bustle and dissipation of a great city, were assembling in considerable numbers. The deputations from one or two more important villages were accompanied by noisy brass bands, and the whole place was astir with sound and colour, for flags were fluttering from every roof and from many windows. Rosalind had run away from the village to a hill at a little distance in order to try and sketch the place under its new aspect, but the scene had been too lively for her pencil, and she had shut up her sketch-book in despair. Still, her eyes were fixed upon the field at her feet; it looked like a large graveyard with its innumerable wooden crosses, except that here and there a wisp of hay was still clinging to the bar, where it had been hung to dry during the second hay-harvest, now all gathered in. Suddenly she caught sight of a figure advancing rapidly towards her, and she sprang to her feet with a vague foreboding of evil, which strengthened as Claude approached. His face was the face of a man who brings momentous news.

"I felt I must come after you to say good-bye," he began hurriedly, noticing the strained look in her eyes; "a summons has come from home, and our pleasant party is broken up."

Rosalind did not answer, the blood slowly deserted her cheek, and surged back to her heart. Seeing her sudden pallor, Claude's heart softened, and his voice with it.

"I am afraid I startled you, but I had

very little time; the telegram only arrived ten minutes ago, and though there is no bad news, still there is hardly time for more than good-bye."

Still she did not speak, for her heart was full of one question—why had he come alone?

"Don't forget me, Rosalind," he said, drawing closer to her and taking her hand; "I wish with all my heart I were not going, but I must not stay longer even to talk to you, for I have got to find my uncle, and say good-bye to him before I start."

"Oh," she cried with the sudden involuntary joy of one from whom a heavy load is lifted; "oh, then it is only you who are going?"

His face seemed to have caught the colour hers had lost, and for one moment the two looked mutely at one another, a whole world of meaning in their eyes. Then, when wounded vanity let him speak, he said with an angry laugh:

"Oh yes, it is only I. Perhaps I had better have spared myself the trouble of coming here to bid you good-bye."

If the moment that had betrayed her secret to him was also the first moment of her own consciousness, she had the self-control to answer him with dignity:

"It was very good of you to come—good-bye, and bon voyage."

She held out her hand as she spoke, and he must needs take it, but he dropped it in a moment, and she turned away, not to the village, but to the wooded path which led to the hill beyond. Claude watched her disappear, and then made his way back to the hotel, his heart full of bitterness, which would not be subdued. Only just as his uncle wrung his hand, and he prepared to spring into the cart-like carriage which was to take him to Niederhofen, he managed to say:

"Uncle, I left Miss Tracy up by the Marien Chapel. I think it would be kind if you would go and fetch her home."

The consciousness that he was, after all, a singularly generous young fellow considerably soothed Claude's feelings as he drove down the valley.

Arnold Eyre, meanwhile, strode across the field and up the hill with a strange misgiving at his heart. The task of consolation which his nephew had laid upon him was hard enough, even without the added difficulty he experienced in his underlying consciousness that, had he been Claude, he would have deputed no one to

such an office. But as he went on his way he trampled his personal feelings under foot, and lost himself in the thought of how he could best console the girl whose happy face had seemed for a time to lend his own life some of its brightness.

The door of the little chapel was half open, and he could see her within, upon her knees, her face buried in her hands. He almost fancied that he could hear her sob. Some of us know how sad it is to stand without the holy place of those we love, and feel that we dare not enter in, even to pray with or comfort them. Arnold stood a little way from the door and waited. He studied the little pictures on the wall, painted to commemorate some wonderful escape or terrible calamity. In one recess the bull in fierce pursuit of a frightened couple was checked in full career by a red-hot cannon-ball thrown from the hand of a patron saint. But the tragedy was close by the comedy, and it did not need the pitiful German words to explain the pathos of the clumsy, grotesque pictures where the mountaineer was falling over a precipice, grasping the edelweiss in his hand, or where the lime-burner was buried beneath a huge heap of chalk and stones.

Rosalind had been conscious of some presence near her as she knelt in the little chapel; but she had imagined it was only some passer-by who had paused for a short prayer, and she started violently when she came out and found herself face to face with Arnold. All his cautious schemes, all his forethought, deserted him as he caught sight of her face with its disturbed look and sad eyes.

"Miss Tracy, Claude sent me to you. You were his last thought as he started."

He had never before known her without a ready answer and a bright look. This must be more than mere sorrow at a short parting from her young lover. He forgot himself entirely in his ardent desire to console her.

"My dear," he said, taking her hand and drawing it through his arm, "you must let me take you home. You are over-tired and over-wrought. Claude, too, went away in low spirits; but it will not be long before you meet again, and then——"

He had spent the better part of his life in ministering to others, and forgot himself. So well had he learnt his lesson that he almost convinced himself that the desire of his heart was to see these

two reunited. Small wonder if the girl to whom he spoke should have believed it too.

She snatched her hand from under his arm, and sprang away a pace or two, looking him full in the face with burning cheeks and fiery eyes.

"How dare you say that?" she cried with fierce resentment in her tone and bearing. "Do you, too, think that I care?"

But before she could finish her sentence her voice broke into passionate sobs, and the tears were making their unaccustomed way down her cheeks. Arnold Eyre's self-reproach was almost stronger than he could bear. What right had he to touch upon her heart's secret?—her despair and her joy were alike remote from him. As she sank down upon the grassy bank and hid her face among the tall ferns, he knelt by her side and uttered broken words, not so much intended to soothe her as to justify himself.

She could not think that he meant to pain her, he who would die to shield her from harm, he who loved her better than any earthly thing. All his hopes, crushed almost as soon as formed, all his love in its tenderness, its despair, rushed from his lips, not in a coherent speech, but in a series of broken sentences which emotion made almost inaudible—but there are moments in life when eloquence is independent of words.

Rosalind's sobs ceased gradually, then she slowly lifted her head and looked at him with a child's trust and a woman's love shining out of her beautiful eyes.

"Do you really think," she asked with a softness and humility which were both strange in one of her fearless bearing; "do you really think that I am good enough to make you happy?"

The evening twilight had fallen, and the fête was over when they returned to the village, but there were still loiterers at the corner of the street, and a few children were playing on the threshold of their homes. One of these ran up to the pair, and put her soft hand in that of the English lady; and another, bolder than the rest, stretched up her tiny warm fingers into the tall gentleman's palm. Neither Arnold nor Rosalind felt that there was anything strange in the action; the sweet evening dusk-light which drew in around them, and hid them from enquiring eyes, was full of love and confidence.

IN THE SPRING-TIME.

I.

ACROSS the strip of silver sea from Lymington lies the demure little red-brick town of Yarmouth. In summer-time the water is brisk with lively freight, but in grey March weather the daily steamer from the mainland is often the only speck to be seen on the clean expanse of sea. Now and again, to be sure, a stately ship, incoming or outward bound, passes along the Solent, but leaves the gap empty as before.

Inshore, too, in the small, clean, tidy streets, there is a compact and orderly look, like the decks of a smartly-officered ship. There is new paint on the low red-tiled cottages, a spick-and-span air about the natty little front-gardens, with their trim wooden palings and rows of geranium-pots, and the air of a Dutch picture in the little, snug inner courts, where you may find an old salt doing a bit of carpentering or mending a fishing-net, while an old cat blinks benignly from a cottage door. There is an old-world air of peace about the little place, a restful, almost Quakerish air, which seems to belong to another age.

Railways and tramways, with their noise and bustle, are not; the sighing of wind and wave, with the monotonous cawing of the rooks from the churchyard elms, are almost the only sounds that break the stillness. Neither summer nor winter alter much the surface-life of this quaint little town. Only the short, dark days bring wind, and sometimes snow, from the downs across the marshes, while the spring brings the warm, genial sun even before the birds build or the trees show their tender buds. June and December indeed find Yarmouth unchanged; the tide of cockney visitors go elsewhere, or at most pass down the pier and take coach in the lumbering old conveyance which plies between Freshwater Gate and the more northern-lying town.

The arrival or departure of this cumbersome vehicle, as in other small places, is the life and soul of the day. The coachman brings parcels and gossip, as well as passengers, from the other end of the island, so that they of Yarmouth gather round the driver with the zest for small news known only to the dwellers of out-lying hamlets. There is also a sharp rivalry on the part of the owners of the two hackney-carriages in which Yarmouth, in the time of need, luxuriates, and which may be seen any day, about the

hour of the arrival of the packet, in the little square or place before the church gate.

It was one blustering, but sunny day, in the early spring, that these worthies respectfully saluted a young girl who had been down the pier to see the arrival of the steamer. Some dozen people, including a couple of men who looked like commercial travellers, and a somewhat dishevelled and sea-sick honeymoon pair, were the only passengers on the boat. This young girl, who was the first to pass the turnstile, was dressed in a simple, dark dress, and wore an air of recent sorrow. Her hair, loosened by the wind, showed itself to be that dark brown colour which is sometimes tinged with auburn, as if the sun had warmed the straying ends. Her brown eyes—eyes that denote a heart full of human sympathies—had a preoccupied look, as if they had focussed their sight to some inner picture, to the exclusion of all other. There was, besides, a set, determined expression about the mouth, and a tinge of ill-health in cheeks which were evidently by nature pale. Her gait, however, was vigorous and firm, her foot clenching the ground at each step with that wholesome grip of earth which denotes the elastic body and lover of open air.

"Be gwine t' th' cottage, miss? If so be, shall be glad to take 'ee," called out the driver of the coach, as he and the hackney-carriage men pressed forward to gain the ear of the scanty passengers as they appeared one by one along the pier from the boat.

"No, thank you, Tom; you may take my shawl and leave it at the cottage as you go past. I shall walk," returned the girl as she put it into the man's hand.

"It's a longish way, miss, you'd best get inside, fur it's like to rain afore night," said the old man, looking to windward.

"Oh no, there will be no rain to-night, Tom. I want to walk home," said the girl.

"Leastways, take this 'ere shawl, we'll ketch you up at the R'yal Garge, and there, p'raps, you'll jump in," reiterated the good-natured old fellow as he wrapped the plaid round her.

In another instant the girl had thanked him with a bright flicker of a smile and had set out on her long walk.

When the little town is once left behind, the road, level and white, lies through a low, boggy tract of land which is covered

by the sea in equinoctial tides. The briny odour of seaweed from the black mud growth, and the cry of the seagulls, add only to the desolate scene. It is a bare, cheerless road, unprotected from summer sun or winter wind, and from it the sea can only be seen as a faint silver streak on the low-lying shore. A mile farther on the ground rises through a graceful clump of trees, and by-and-by, on the spreading gorse-covered downs, a splendid panorama of sky and sea breaks on the view.

The wind dropped as the solitary girl's figure gained the higher ground, and sweet bird-notes from the hedges smote her ear. She had remained hitherto on the high-road, where the passing villagers for the most part saluted her, but now, skirting a village, she broke into a narrow foot-path which ascended a steeply rising down.

The setting sun was gilding the ruddy new-ploughed earth, while behind the high straggling hedge on her left came the plaintive bleating of young lambs. In the hushed air there was a warm, balmy odour, and in the earth a springiness which spoke of wakening life. The pungent earth seemed to heave with its teeming growth, while faint cries from bird and insect in the hedgerows gave further witness to the newly quickened life. Pale primroses and stately golden daffodils were lifting their heads by the wayside, while the delicious warbling of an invisible bird seemed to fill the air with its trembling pulsation. The gently stirring breath of spring wafted a hundred scents over the warm, moist earth, while the last rays of the setting sun bathed the landscape in an indistinct but golden radiance.

Beyond the crest of hill on the descending road into the next village lies a lonely farmhouse, protected on the north side by a dense copse and wood. The nearest habitation is a mile and a half away; the church some three-quarters of a mile as the crow flies.

It was in nearing this lonely homestead, known as the Callows Farm, that the girl heard a distant sound. It was followed in a few minutes by the rustling of the dead leaves and the cracking of twigs in the hedgerow, and then a dog's wet nose saluted her hand with all the usual canine manifestations of joy. At the same moment a gaitered leg appeared over a stile some fifty yards off, and the dog's master—a broad-shouldered young man, dressed in a rough shooting-suit, sprang into the road.

His face was bronzed and singularly open, with its keen blue eyes and cleanly-cut features; but for the moment there was an undeniably listless and vague air in his gait and mien which sat strangely on a man of his physique. The listless air, however, vanished as he caught sight of the girl's figure on the road.

The twilight had begun to fall by this time, and the dense wood overhanging the turn of the road made it seem darker than it really was. The most profound silence reigned. Every bird was hushed; except for the melancholy cawing of some rooks overhead in the tall elm-trees, not a sound broke the stillness. A sort of white mist, too, was creeping up in the hollows, making even near objects blurred and indistinct; only high above the road the grim old trees, with their skeleton arms, loomed against the darkling sky. There was something strange and oppressive in the air—something fantastic and weird in the uncanny half-light. Bats flitted from out the darkness of the thicket with their strange swaying movement. The white road lay lost in the upward-creeping mists.

"Jane Merryweather!" exclaimed the young man, advancing to meet her. "Why are you by yourself on this lonely road at night?"

"The road won't hurt me; I'm accustomed to being alone," she replied curtly, without any form of greeting, and, if anything, quickening her pace.

"Why do you refuse to see me when I call at the cottage? You have changed ever since I went up to town last week," continued the young man as he walked beside her. "Jane, do you do any human being any good by being so strange?"

"I never gave you leave to call me by my christian-name," the girl broke in.

"Well, never mind what name I call you by—that doesn't alter anything. I've been waiting about these three or four days to catch sight of you. You don't think I'm going to let you go now without a word?"

"It won't do any good."

"You were not always so hard on me. What have I done to displease you? Who has come between us? By Heaven! if any man has come between us, and taken you from me, I'll——"

The man did not finish his sentence, but his clenched hand and burning eyes might well have frightened any but the determined young woman at his side.

For some minutes there was silence between the two. They emerged out of the cover of the wood into the high-road, which again led over the downs. It was quite dark now.

Here and there faint stars began to peep through the vaporous sky, but below, over the wide landscape, the earth lay white and shadowy in its veil of mist.

To the right of the road, at a distance of perhaps nearly a quarter of a mile, lay some cottages, whose cheerful lights began now to show through their misty curtain. It was not until the man's eye caught these lights that he again broke the silence.

"Janey, you didn't always dislike me! Surely you remember last summer in the wood," he said, turning to her with a kind of entreaty in his voice. "Surely you didn't hate me then?"

"Last summer is gone," she answered, with a shade of softening in her voice. "I can only speak for the present;" but then, changing her tone suddenly, she added fiercely: "There has been enough of all this—you have no right to follow me."

"Some day you shall care for me!" he exclaimed more fiercely. "You did love, there has been some sort of foul play; you couldn't have changed so. Janey——"

"If you persecute me, I shall simply leave the place, and—and then—you know my aunt is very fond of Yarmouth. Leave me alone, and all this may be forgotten; but if you speak to me again, you will force us to leave."

All this the girl said entreatingly, as if she were trying to believe her own words. There was a break in her voice when she added after a pause:

"I—I am fond of—of the place, too."

"Fond of the place—fond of it!" he muttered to himself. "Why should you ever leave it? Janey," he went on quickly, "why should you ever leave it? Isn't it all yours, if you would only have it? My darling," he went on, seizing her two hands, "couldn't you get a little fond of something besides the place—a little fond of me, Janey? Would it be so hard?"

They had reached by this time the first little trim cottage with its flowering laurestinus, its gravel path, and tidy forget-me-not beds, set roundly in the twin sloping grass-plots.

Often enough the most ordinary and familiar objects have the power, in moments of excitement, to bring us back to our

ordinary selves, to what we may conceive to be our duty, and the more usual tenor of our lives. At such moments we catch at straws, remembering words spoken to us in childhood, and torture significance out of the crowing of a cock or the striking of an hour.

Some such mental conflict seemed to be fighting in the young girl who had now reached the cottage gate. She had turned back for an instant, and suffered her eye to travel over the sleeping landscape. The white mist had crowded up into the hollows of the undulating downs so that the crest of Swallow's Hill, with its dense black wood, looked like some island in a frothy sea. One end of Callows Farm only loomed out of the mass of trees against the pale milky sky. Seawards the little dappled clouds were breaking like foam before a young crescent moon which was rising over a distant ridge of hills.

It was a lovely, unearthly night, in which it would be especially hard to say hard things. Perhaps this girl felt it would be easy on this calm, serene night to yield to the words which seemed to vibrate in her pulses, and carry her, as on the breast of some smooth-flowing river, to the inward peace that would be in tune with the outward scene. The night seemed to speak of satisfaction and rest.

Yet it was only for a moment that she suffered her hands to lie in the grasp of the man who was pleading so earnestly. A dog's bark was heard in the distance, and at that moment a shadow crossed the window of the brightly-lighted cottage. The girl snatched her hands away, and sprang by her companion. Her determination seemed to receive a fresh spur as she now faced the cottage, and pealed quickly at the bell.

"It is no use—no use; what you wish never—never—never can be," she whispered vehemently, while her eyes flashed into the young man's. "Do you hear me?—never!" and with this most dismal of all words in human language on her lips, she passed up the garden, and, as the door opened, disappeared into the brightly-lighted hall.

II.

The Callows Farm was an old Elizabethan house which, from its commanding position on the crest of a gently rising down, known as Swallow's Hill, could be seen for miles around. Its original lines had evidently not been devoid of some architectural grace, but an ugly Georgian wing to the

right of the house, which had been added in the last century, gave the building an uncomfortable and lopsided appearance. The place had, besides, a grass-grown and mildewed look, a sort of vacant, forlorn air, such as you see in a dog who has lost his master. Yet it was not empty; save for the larger rooms of the Georgian wing, the house was occupied.

Mrs. Brock, the mistress of Callows Farm, indeed never left the grounds, having been confined to her room for many years by a spinal complaint which robbed her of all powers of walking.

She was an only child, and had inherited the place from old Callow, a shrewd, thrifty, if slightly parsimonious gentleman who died when she had attained her thirty-ninth year. It was some nine months after this respectable gentleman's decease that the mistress of Callows Farm married Mr. Brock, a dashing but impecunious man-about-town, whom she had met at some foreign spa. From this day forth things were changed at the Callows Farm. For a time all went merrily enough. The new master knew nothing of parsimony and loved good cheer, and pleased himself hugely in his new country home, riding to hounds in the winter, and playing with the management of the farm.

It may have been that his talents were not of the peace-making order. His temper, it is to be feared, was of the hot and slightly overbearing kind. It is indisputable that the overseer who had been on the Callows Farm for twenty years, left with a long tale of grievances, and that want of management made things go badly at Swallow's Hill.

The new country gentleman's ardour for the country turned out to be somewhat intermittent; there were months together in which he was not seen near Yarmouth, and in which, it was whispered by neighbours, he had gone back to his old haunts in town. True, Mr. Brock displayed himself in all his bravery at the hunt breakfasts, and in entertaining his friends at dinner. He liked to imply an expensive mode of living, and among other things to be called the "Squire," and be taken for a staunch Conservative. In reality it was not in Squire Brock's nature to be staunch about anything, even in matters which affected him more closely than political principles, but he perhaps took it to be part of a country gentleman's propaganda to talk of "blatant radicals" and "rascally agitators."

"I don't pretend to be a politician," Mr.

Brock was in the habit of saying to his neighbours. "I'm not a politician, but what do these low rascals want? They want the land," Mr. Brock would say grandiloquently over his lunch-table as he waved his white hand, on which he wore a large diamond. "They want my land, they want my house, they would like to turn me out of Callows Farm. That's what these miserable agitators want! What would become of us gentlemen, I should like to know, if we were to listen to them!"

At other times he would lead his guests round to the broad terrace which fronted the house, and say:

"That's my land as far as you can see—as far as you can see. As fine a tract of country as any in England. I think I may say that without boasting."

There was nothing either startling or new in Squire Brock's pretensions, but they seemed to have an irritating effect on his now grown-up son. Strange contradictions are frequently seen between parents and their offspring; in the case of Mr. Brock and his son nature seemed, so to speak, to have underlined their oppositeness.

There had been great rejoicings and a good deal of pride on the part of the new squire when a little more than a quarter of a century back the mistress of Callows Farm had presented her husband with a son. In the face of the property being tied up on Mrs. Brock and her heirs, or, failing issue, to pass to old Mr. Callow's nephew, who had the happiness to possess five stalwart sons, it is hardly necessary to say that the small heir was made welcome. He was rocked in satin and lace, and had a brace of godfathers from town to give him a number of fine names, of which, however, he availed himself but sparsely, preferring in later life to sign himself "Ned" on all but formal occasions.

It was not until the following summer, when his father again betook himself to the distraction of town, that they discovered that poor Mrs. Brock was likely to be an invalid for life. There was a great deal of head-shaking, and a number of cures were tried. "There had been complications," said the great man, the physician called in by the country doctor; but in the end the great man and the "complications" left the mistress of Callows Farm on a sofa from which she never rose.

Before that time she had been a rather eager and emphatic woman, apt, perhaps, to persuade her neighbours to take her

particular tonic, and inclined to insist upon their going her particular short cut to heaven.

She was large-boned, and a trifle angular in shape, authoritative, and chilling in manner, but with a sort of native dignity which sustained her under many trials.

She bore her confined and solitary life as only women can, and suffered without a murmur the many indignities of her husband as only women will. The squire's coldness, and her long helpless illness, did much to change the poor lady. It may have been that in the loneliness of the night the poor woman soothed her grief with tears, and, perhaps, with prayers, but to no living being did she ever discover the disappointment of her matured years.

To the neighbours who gathered round her sofa, with their inquisitive sympathy, and indiscreet condolences, Mrs. Brock had but one answer:

"My husband has gone to town to see my lawyer," or, "My husband has gone to do a little business; now I am such an invalid he has everything to do for me."

Her son as he grew up loved her, not passionately and extravagantly, as sons love injured mothers in plays and novels, but heartily and faithfully like the solid, undemonstrative Englishman he was, but even to him she did not tell the story of this quarter of a century of her life.

Perhaps she saw that the breach between father and son was likely to be wide enough without any intervention of hers, but it is probable that he guessed what she so carefully withheld from him. Even by the time the boy left school it was no secret to those about the farm that there was disagreement and ill-will, at any rate on the father's side, between these nearest of kinsmen. At the age of twenty the boy had a strongly marked individuality, the sort of individuality which was not likely to please his somewhat superficial and pushing father.

Instead of remaining at a university, to make, as Squire Brock said, "desirable acquaintances," Ned insisted on going to an agricultural college.

"He'll come back with all sorts of new-fangled notions, and probably think he knows better than his father," the squire would exclaim over the dessert, on the occasions when his wife was well enough to be carried down to dinner. "He'll want to make improvements, I'll be bound," the father would grumble on. "I know what that means—more out of our pockets."

In the meantime the squire, who considered himself a good judge of horse-flesh, kept a couple of hunters as well as a hack in his stables. He continued also to keep on his bachelor chambers in Ryder Street, because, as he often explained, he could not be expected to bury himself at Swallow's Hill. The expensive tastes, of which the squire had been so proud twenty years before, had now become part of his life.

Money troubles, and the constant drain on the invalid's purse in consequence, were making themselves felt in more ways than one. The poor old lady seemed broken, as if the fret and wear of her married life had destroyed her mental as well as her physical force. People, of course, wondered how anyone, who had been as sensible and practical as Miss Callow, could be now so foolishly weak with a good-for-nothing and spendthrift husband. She had always been credited with some of her father's thrift; how was it that she parted now with her last sixpence? What they ignored was that Mrs. Brock was just one of those wives whose affections bear the strain of hard usage.

It was thus that, when young Edward Brock returned to Callows Farm, he found a somewhat impoverished and dreary home. The place had become desolate and grass-grown since his childhood, the land had run to waste, the very farm-labourers had dwindled away.

Great things were expected, however, from the home-coming of the young squire. He was loved at once for his honest, open face, and the simple people round immediately thought that things would now, by some sort of magic, right themselves.

"Oh, ain't 'ee like th' old squire? 'Ee ain't a bit like 'is faather!" the villagers said, as they caught sight of his stalwart figure on the high-road. "I allows 'ee like th' old squire; but don't 'ee be in a fantigue," said the old housekeeper. And the old men, over their pipes and beer in the tap-room of the Royal George, told gallant tales of the grandfather who, in his day, they had probably thought a miserly, if tolerably just and lenient master.

It was in the second year after Ned Brock's home-coming that he began to notice a slim girl's figure passing in and out of the labourers' cottages at Swallow's Hill, or sometimes climbing the downs among the gorse in the fresh spring weather. At first he felt nothing more than the natural curiosity which every

young man feels at the sight of a graceful young woman.

By-and-by, as his business took him oftener into Yarmouth, the familiar figure on the downs seemed to become a part of the wayside picture, and he found himself looking for her coming, and missing her if she did not come. The road seemed dreary if he did not manage to catch sight of the slender girl's form gathering prim-roses in the high hedges, or passing with light tread by the little wicket-gate in the short cut across the churchyard.

It was a winsome, gracious apparition, Ned thought, and yet proud and maidenly, very different from the self-conscious young ladies he had seen in town.

Of course, when a young man has arrived at this precise state of mind, it is no difficult matter to get an introduction to the lady of his fancy, and having achieved this, it is the simplest thing in the world to fall in love with her.

So it came to pass that Ned Brock made up his mind to say the decisive word, and learn what manner of grace would be meted out to him.

About that time Squire Brock ran down for a few days to the Callows Farm, and young Ned very naturally took the opportunity of speaking of his intentions to his father.

It is possible Ned expected some strong opposition on the part of the squire; he was therefore surprised and somewhat taken off his guard when the latter gentleman received his news in a quiet, almost an acquiescent spirit.

"So, my dear boy, you are in love with Miss Merryweather?" said Squire Brock as they sat over their after-dinner wine one evening. "May I ask if the lady returns your affection?"

"I don't know—yet. I've not said anything," said the young fellow, flushing up.

"So much the better, so much the better," said the squire quickly, with something like a sigh of relief. He then filled his glass, and passed on to speak of other matters in connection with a disputed right of way from the glebe-land to an outlying farmhouse belonging to Swallow's Hill.

The next morning the squire came to Ned with an open letter in his hand.

"Here is more of this tiresome business," he said. "I shall be threatened with proceedings and dragged into a lawsuit next. My dear boy, you would do me a great favour if you could run up to town to-day

and have a look at the Quorn Farm papers. They are at the bank. You will be able to see at once what right we really have, and if there is any bother about it, take them to Higgins, our solicitor."

When, a few hours later, Ned Brock was steaming over the Solent, the squire had put on his hat and was strolling, cigar in mouth, down the road in the direction of Miss Merryweather's cottage.

Miss Merryweather was at home, and the squire, parting reluctantly with his havannah, was ushered into the small, prim drawing-room, and then the blind was raised at least ten inches, and a small chair was placed for his accommodation in the centre of the room, facing a newly-lit and chilly-looking fire.

The circumstances were certainly discouraging, and insomuch as the squire knew little of Miss Merryweather, he was not a little beholden to chance for the successful issue of his visit.

On the appearance of the young lady, the squire put on his most bland and complimentary manner, keeping up a stream of small-talk on indifferent topics for some ten minutes. At last he said:

"You have seen a good deal of my son lately, Miss Merryweather?"

"Yes, I have seen him pretty frequently," the girl returned.

"Ah, a foolish boy—a foolish boy! gives us a great deal of trouble," said Squire Brock in self-commiserating tones.

"Indeed!" said Jane Merryweather coldly.

"Yea. You may think it strange, perhaps, that I should come to one so young as yourself to talk of private affairs, but it struck me that a young lady of your admirable bringing-up and strong character might have a great influence on my poor boy—a great influence."

"In what way, may I ask, Mr. Brock?" said the girl, who was now fairly astonished.

"Oh, in a hundred ways, my dear Miss Merryweather," went on the undaunted squire; "boys are so extremely foolish, so extremely injudicious, they have no regard for the fitness of things."

"Have you any reason for thinking your son injudicious at the present time?" asked Jane slowly, in an icy undertone.

"Indeed we have," said Mr. Brock, now boldly showing his hand. "My dear Miss Merryweather, the poor boy is always falling in love; of course it is a mere folly, he will have forgotten all about it by the end of the month, no doubt, but in the

meantime boys entangle themselves so easily, and there are many things to be considered—questions of means and family, you understand, with his name and position.”

“I should have thought that no lady would be anxious to push herself into a family where she was unwelcome,” said the girl.

“You think so?” cried the delighted squire. “Ah, no doubt any delicately minded woman would feel as you do. Your sentiments do you infinite credit, Miss Merryweather. You see, with my boy’s position, with his property, in fact, there are important reasons which prevent his marrying the first agreeable girl he sees. And yet if he knew I had spoken in the matter—he is such an obstinate fellow—you understand me, I am sure, Miss Merryweather?”

“I think I understand you, Mr. Brock,” said the girl with some dignity, as she rose and stood facing him with folded hands, “and I should say that you might set your mind at rest concerning the young lady with whom you say your son is in love. I should say, as you have asked my advice, that rather than force herself on a family, she would prefer never to speak to your son again;” and opening the door she bowed to the squire, saying, “I presume that, if she knew your feeling in the matter, that is what she would say.”

The squire was compelled to rise. He had not intended the affair to take so uncomfortable a turn, and having looked upon petticoated humanity as easily flattered and managed, had had it in his mind to end his visit with some compliment or joke. Neither pleasantry came to his mind, however, as he rose before the stern gesture of this pale young woman. Muttering something about “knowing he could depend on her fine insight,” the squire bowed himself out of the room.

On gaining the road he was conscious that it was a shabby retreat. The victory indeed was his, and yet it is possible he felt more humiliation than if it had been a defeat.

III.

“Aunt Maria,” called out Jane Merryweather on the morning following the episode recorded in our first chapter.

“My love,” answered a thin but cheery voice from the upper regions of the dapper little cottage.

“Aren’t you coming down to lunch, aunt?” called out the girl again.

“I’m coming, my dear, this instant,”

returned the elder lady, who as a rule disappeared finally into some top cupboard or back cellar after making this encouraging statement.

On the present occasion she actually appeared in the miniature dining-room some twelve minutes later, and the two ladies, that is to say one of them, proceeded to eat lunch, which was set on a small table overlooking the garden.

“My dear child, why don’t you eat?” said Aunt Maria after some ten minutes, in which Miss Merryweather had done little but play with her knife and fork.

“I don’t feel hungry to-day, aunt,” said the girl, who now got up and pushed away her chair.

Presently she began pacing up and down the room.

“Do you know, aunt, I believe it is warm enough to open the window,” said the girl. “Aunt, should you catch cold if I were to open it?” went on Miss Merryweather, as she threw open the casement. “How delicious the air is!” she said rather dreamily as she stepped outside.

The small garden was gay with primroses and crocuses, and filled with the hum of insects and the indescribable but easily perceptible movement of spring. Everything quivered with life. How prim, and tidy, and orderly it looked, the little garden which she knew so well! There was the rose-tree she had planted two summers ago, with the delicate young leaves just bursting from their buds. Beyond stood a great bunch of golden daffodils in the bright, pale sunshine. That was all her eye seemed to focus as she stood bare-headed against the little grass-plot and the faint blue sky. Just outside the garden somewhere a skylark was singing. Every now and then a bird flew past the girl’s motionless figure, and a faint cock-crow from some distant garden sounded through the air. A vague restlessness seemed to stir in her veins as the dizzy dancing sunlight and the hundred balmy odours of spring-time played around her. A feeling of isolation took possession of her in this scene of busy, opening life.

“Aunt Maria, I feel as if I should like to walk twenty miles. Do you ever feel like that?” said Miss Merryweather rather abruptly, as she returned to the open window where her aunt was still quietly eating her lunch.

“My dear, the air is very fresh; would you have the kindness to come in and shut the window?” returned the elder lady.

The young girl obeyed rather listlessly, and then threw herself into an easy-chair by the little fireplace.

"My dear aunt, don't you ever get tired of eating your lunch at just the same time of day, and going to bed at just the same time of night?" asked the girl rather irritably after a few minutes' pause, in which the placid lady at the lunch-table had gone on steadily eating.

"My dear child, what an odd idea!" exclaimed the lady.

"Fancy eating every day of one's life at one o'clock for fifty years," went on the girl; "isn't the idea enough to take away your appetite? The monotony of it is enough to make one go mad. It's a wonder so many people make up their minds to go through the labour of living so many years——"

"My dear child, I wish you would behave like an ordinary human being with a head set on its shoulders, instead of tempting Providence by talking such nonsense," broke in Aunt Maria.

"My dear Aunt Maria, I think I have frequently pointed out to you that you are wholly deficient in imagination. If you had even the slightest perception of the beautiful, for instance——"

"All I can say is, Jane, that if you don't take it into your head to eat like a Christian before to-morrow, I shall send for the doctor," said Aunt Maria decisively.

"Ah, suppose we see the doctor," said the girl with a smile; "I shall tell the doctor that the spring weather is seriously affecting my health, and that I want change of air, and he will immediately prescribe change of air; and then—and then—— Aunt, wouldn't you like to go to Dresden, or perhaps to Rome?"

"What has come to the girl?" ejaculated Aunt Maria. "Just now it was a walk of twenty miles, now it's Dresden, if you please. What place in the four quarters of the globe will you pitch on next, for goodness sake?"

"Oh, there are lots of places. There's Normandy, for instance. No, that would be too cold just yet; but there's Naples or Sicily, you know. Rome would be delightful for Easter. Aunt, I know you would like to kiss the Pope's toe, it's no use saying you wouldn't."

"I've never seen anything like your restlessness for the last three or four days, Jane," expostulated Aunt Maria. "You are never still for an instant. I'm sure I've heard you say dozens of times that you

wouldn't be happy away from Swallow's Hill. You couldn't bear the notion of going to India. Of course, if you were really ill, and had to go away, it would be another thing. Then there's the house; if I did want to go away, how could we leave it?"

"Oh, let it," cried the girl airily. "But in the meantime I really will go for a walk, and consider whether Rome or Naples would be the nicer;" and then, kissing her aunt, Miss Merryweather ran upstairs for her hat and jacket, and soon disappeared for the rest of the afternoon.

Jane Merryweather was the daughter of an English officer stationed in India, the eldest of some five or six children who had been sent home for their education. She had now left her "finishing school" some two years, being nearly twenty-one years of age, but had not, as had first been intended, returned to her parents across the seas. The fact was that Janey had been in the habit of spending her vacation with her Aunt Maria, Miss McLachlan, and that good lady had become so fond of her niece that she had prayed for the loan of her companionship for another year before she returned to India. The year had spread itself into two when there began to be a talk of Colonel and Mrs. Merryweather returning to England. The latest arrangement had been that Mrs. Merryweather should come back in the following summer, and be accompanied, if possible, by her husband. So Janey stayed on with Miss McLachlan, much to her own and to that lady's satisfaction.

Her restlessness dated only from the day on which Squire Brock had done her the honour to call at the cottage, and it increased rather than diminished as the next few days went by.

Miss Merryweather was young, and was perhaps learning for the first time the wide difference which distinguishes a piece of impulsive self-denial from the unexciting, everyday, inch-by-inch endurance of a like piece of renunciation.

And yet, dreary as the experience was, she did nothing to alter her decision.

It was only after a rather sleepless night that she began to think that her promise to the squire would be easier to keep if she were out of the reach of his son's appeals. "How would it be," she asked herself, "if her love should, in some weak moment, prove stronger than her pride?" She feared, lest in listening to the son, she might forget the squire's galling words, and

be tempted to present herself at the doors of this inhospitable family, only to be slighted. Jane Merryweather knew nothing of the disposition of the Swallow's Hill property, and had she been in full possession of all the facts, it is only fair to say that it would have made no difference in her conduct; indeed, it would have only made her firmer in her decision to have nothing to do with fascinating or entrapping anyone so "injudicious" as the squire had called the young heir.

She had mentioned going abroad to her aunt that day more in joke than anything else, but as she wandered over the downs the idea began to fix itself in her mind. She felt confined and cramped in this small place, with its narrow, placid existence, its little round of pleasures, and, above all, with this intolerable self-imposed duty of being hard to the man she loved.

Somewhere—anywhere away it would be easier to bear, she felt. Go where she would his words seemed to be ringing in her ears, and walk as far as she might, at some point of the road, she would be sure to see the gables of Callows Farm, his home, to bring back this strange new pain. Only the day before she had told him that it would be a grief to her to go away from Swallow's Hill, now it struck her that it would be far more intolerable to stay.

In great mental distress we shift our minds as in a physical one we do our bodies, both in a perfectly natural effort to rid ourselves of what seems unbearable pain. So through the long afternoon of the lengthening March day, one weary fancy chased another through her brain, as looking from headland to headland she set herself the task of walking to the farthest point she could see. Below her lay the sea savagely lashing the rocky shore with its fringe of surf, while above her the great clouds moved in solemn procession, until they were lost in one another in the vast horizon.

Here at least she could breathe, she no longer felt the unendurable confinement of the narrow cottage walls, the ticking of the hall-clock, or the regularity of the meals which she could no longer eat. Yet how wide and cheerless those rugged, wind-blown downs appeared! There was no earnest in them of any joy to come. Here was neither the promise of spring nor summer, but the look of hard endurance which even the changing seasons would not change.

She sat down at last to rest, and began plucking the little golden sea-thistles which nestle in the coarse brown grass. Far off, on the narrow path skirting the cliff by which she had come, she could now discern a solitary man's figure coming in her direction. Her heart began to beat with excitement as the fear took hold of her that perhaps the figure might be that of her lover; but when, after some quarter of an hour, it turned out to be a stranger, she experienced one of those natural but inconsistent pangs of disappointment which the cessation of any excitement, whether pleasant or otherwise, invariably brings.

That evening, as Jane Merryweather sat in a low chair opposite her aunt in the small drawing-room, on the same large white mat, before the same fire with its needlework fire-board, impossible lustre candlesticks, she again experienced the strange, unreal feeling of the morning. It was as if she were some stranger, regarding her familiar surroundings. Had they not sat just so, her aunt with her feet slightly raised on a stool, and a small table with lights by her side, as she embroidered the same piece of elaborate altar-cloth, while she discoursed affably of any exciting horror she had culled from the penny papers? This they had done every evening for the space of two years, without finding the time either tiresome or monotonous. Yet, tired as she was, Jane Merryweather felt restless in her chair, and told herself that such evenings were no longer possible. The very click of Miss McLachlan's needle was irritating.

"Squire Brock has gone up to town again, I hear," began Aunt Maria composedly, as she cleared her voice for a long "cosy" chat with her niece.

"Yes—has he?" said Jane Merryweather vaguely, looking into the fire. She had now no possible interest in the squire's movements, and would have preferred not to have had the name of Brock mentioned in her hearing again.

But, as through a combination of pride and shyness she had mentioned nothing of the interview with the squire, and her aunt in consequence knew nothing of what had occurred, she could give no possible reason for avoiding the subject of such legitimate gossip.

"Poor old Mrs. Brock seems very ill," went on Miss McLachlan; "very ill. I shouldn't be surprised to hear of—anything happening to her any day," she went on, drawing a long thread of silk through her

work and regarding her stitch critically. "By-the-bye, I heard that Mr. Edward is to go away—going to America, the dear vicar said. I should say that if he does go he would never see his poor old mother alive again."

"Going away?" said Jane quickly. "Who said—— Did the vicar say he was going away?"

Miss McLachlan had risen to ring the bell to give some final order to the servant, and now turned round to her niece as she re-seated herself.

"My dear child, how pale you look! I really cannot have you taking these long walks; they cannot be good for any girl. You must go to bed early to-night," said Miss McLachlan, looking over her spectacles at her niece, who was sitting quite erect in her chair, with her hand pressing tightly the arm of that piece of furniture.

"Oh, I'm all right, auntie," she replied. "You were saying something about young Mr. Brock going away to America, weren't you?" she asked with a manifest effort to keep to her usual manner.

"That is what several people told me in the village; I can't vouch for it," returned Aunt Maria. "Now I think of it, it's very odd he hasn't called to tell us about it; for my part, considering how much we've seen of him, I think it's very odd. But young men are queer, my dear—very queer."

After waiting for some sort of remark or acquiescence from Jane, Miss McLachlan repeated:

"Don't you think it's very queer he's not called to tell us?"

"Odd? Oh, I don't know;" and rising, and turning her back to her aunt, she stood with her two hands on the mantel-board as she gazed into the fire. Presently she heard Miss McLachlan murmur:

"Well, well, it's no business of mine," and then the monotonous click of the indefatigable needle began again.

"I think I really will go to bed; it is a good idea of yours, auntie," said the girl after a minute, and kissing her aunt forthwith, she escaped from the room to the silence and freedom of her own chamber.

IV.

Jane Merryweather did not go to bed when she reached her room, but blew out her candle, and pulling up the blinds, sat looking out of her window over the shadowy landscape. The moon was shining, and she could just distinguish

one end of the Callows Farm looking out of the distant mass of trees. It was a pale, chilly night, in which field and wold shone with a thin layer of hoar-frost, while the wind, moving swift and high, drove a bank of dappled clouds in streaks across the sky. Now and then voices were heard on the road beneath the window, and at intervals the distant sound of a dog's howl. Presently she heard the bolting of doors, and then the two servants, and afterwards her aunt, come upstairs, and soon all was quiet for the night. Just after the big hall-clock struck ten, and Jane Merryweather, tired out with her long walk, began to undress and go to bed.

She had no idea how long she had been asleep, when she suddenly opened her eyes. The room was quite quiet, but the moonlight lay in bright streaks across her bed. She had forgotten to pull down the blind, and for some time lay watching the bright clouds as they scudded across the sky. Every minute she seemed to get more wide awake, and, as sleep at last appeared impossible, she threw a shawl round her shoulders and began to pace up and down the room. The moon had considerably altered its position since she had gone to bed, so that, although she heard no clock strike, she judged it to be about one o'clock in the morning.

How beautiful the moon was! It shone on the white road which led to Swallow's Hill, on the roof of the old house, so that it could be seen nearly as clearly as in the ordinary light of day. Her head felt very hot, so that she leant it against the cold pane of glass as she watched the old house in the distance, of which she had become so fond. All at once it seemed to her that a dense cloud of smoke poured from one of the chimney-stacks of the Callows Farm, and in less than a minute after she saw a bright flame leap out of the volume of smoke. The flame increased, as she strained her eyes to watch, and soon the whole stack was enveloped in dense smoke and flame. It was on fire! Instinctively, and without a moment's reflection, she turned from the window, struck a light, and began putting on her clothes.

The Callows Farm was on fire—what was the best thing to be done? It would be useless to wake her aunt, who would be frightened out of her life; to whom should she go? Jane Merryweather was dressed by this time, and slipping quietly downstairs, unbolted the door, and in another minute was running down the road.

Tom Jones, the coach-driver, lived at the corner of the street, so throwing a stone at his window, she called out the bad news, bidding him follow as quickly as possible, then hurried on the ascending road to Swallow's Hill.

How the thoughts surged through her brain as she tore along! The fire was not in the quarter of the house in which either Mrs. Brock or her son slept, but the place was almost entirely built of wood—oak, old and well-seasoned, in which the fire would spread with terrible rapidity. The wind was springing up too. Was it in the direction of the sleeping-rooms? If the fire caught the roof? Would they be awake? Would they have had the alarm? How should she get at them? These, and a hundred other questions, tore at her heart as she hurried on breathlessly, with only the sound of her own footsteps and heavy breathing on the lonely road. Every now and again she caught sight of the burning house, between the dark masses of trees, then it was lost in an undulation of the road, and she could only see the awful glare of red in the sky to mark the whereabouts of the Callows Farm. She had entered the wood by this time, and the wind stirring in the arms of the skeleton trees creaked and groaned in an uncanny way as the fitful moonlight and the tree-shadows flecked her uneven path. How long the way seemed! Should she never reach the farm? The wind was blowing in her face, and already smoke and soot and small sparks of fire were visible overhead. The next minute she was conscious of footsteps behind her. She could distinctly hear the panting breath of running men. Thank Heaven! there was some help at hand then, and Jane Merryweather, turning her head, saw two coast-guardsmen from Freshwater Gate making with all speed for the farm. One of the men she knew. She had often had long talks with him on the downs about the seagulls' nests and the ship adventures of the coast.

"If there is no one stirring, break open a window or door!" she screamed, as the two men passed her in full swing. "I know where the sleeping-rooms are and the best flight of stairs to take."

It was impossible to keep up with them. In another minute they had disappeared in the darkness of the wood, and Jane could only hear the sound of their quickly-falling foot-treads.

In three minutes more, however, she had

gained a side-gate of the farmyard leading to the cow-sheds, and climbing the gate in the shower of soot and sparks, she gained the back wing of the house as the coast-guardsmen with their united efforts crashed in a small side-door.

"Follow me," cried the girl. "This door leads into a side-passage to the kitchen, I think, and we can then get into the other wing of the house," cried Jane Merryweather breathlessly, as she darted on in front of the men and groped her way along the dark passage.

One man growled and told her not to go on, but to leave it to them; but by this time Jane, feeling her way along by the walls, had traversed the kitchen, and had gained the passage which led to the living-rooms, where she was met by a dense cloud of smoke. For a moment she felt stifled and dizzy, but as she heard the two men groping behind her, she gained courage, and pressed on to the right, where a turn in the passage brought them to the foot of the stairs leading to the upper floor.

"This way!" she cried, and darting up the stairs, with her hand firmly clasping the banister, she again encountered a still thicker wall of smoke.

She noticed that it seemed to be coming from the right wing, so that the room which lay to the left, which Mrs. Brock occupied, might still be untouched by the devouring flames. At the same time it became hotter every moment.

Jane managed to creep to this upper landing, where she could distinctly hear screams, which seemed to proceed from this latter side.

At that moment she stumbled against something, and heard Ned Brock's voice exclaiming to an apparently terrified servant:

"There is the staircase now; you are not hurt; you can get out by the front door. Run as hard as you can to Golden Hill Fort for the engine. As hard as you can—do you hear?"

"Ned—Ned!" cried Jane Merryweather. "Is that you? Are you hurt?" she exclaimed, as she clung to him as if she could never let him go again.

"Good Heavens, Jane!" he answered, "how are you here?"

"Where is your mother?" she went on, as he quickly guided her downstairs out of danger of the fire.

"Thank Heaven she is outside in the garden. I've just carried her down, but she'll be killed out there in the cold. I must run back for a mattress and shawl."

They had reached the ground-floor by this time, and as he indicated the way out, and turned to go back, a tremendous crash echoed through the house, and a great flame lit up the down-pouring smoke at the head of the passage. The floor had fallen in. Jane nearly tumbled to the ground with the force of the shock, but managed to stagger towards her lover, who clasped her tightly in his arms. They were nearly choked with the suffocating and blinding smoke. The heat was frightful, as the flames now lapped along the ceiling. Blindly and desperately he struggled along the passage, while she whispered :

"You must not go back—you shall not. My—my darling, I love you—I have loved you all the time !"

The next instant she had lost consciousness, and it was the weight of a lifeless figure that he dragged out into the open air.

Some days after, Jane Merryweather was sitting in Miss McLachlan's prim little drawing-room. She was half-lounging, half-reclining in a large armchair, and had a book on her lap and a bunch of primroses in a vase on a table at her side. She wore a knitted blue shawl over her shoulders, and had the languid air of a person who is being petted and made much of.

It is possible that Miss Merryweather had succumbed to her aunt's entreaties and had allowed herself the dissipation of being ill. At any rate Miss McLachlan had been in her glory for a whole week, making mysterious brews, and running about with a bottle of port wine under her arm, a glass of which fluid she was continually offering her niece. There was nothing which roused Miss McLachlan's enthusiasm like having some one to nurse.

"Ah, my love !" she exclaimed, coming into the dining-room, "how are you now ? Surely the light will hurt your eyes ; let me lower the blind just a little ?"

Aunt Maria fussed about the room with twenty suggestions for her niece's comfort, which, of course, had the effect of making her uncomfortable.

"My dear aunt, I am perfectly well, only I feel frightfully lazy," returned the girl. "Won't you get your work and sit down ?"

"My dear, I've not had the altar-piece out for a whole week. You frightened me to death, my dear, when you were brought home that night. I wonder you weren't killed. I don't wonder it was too much for

poor old Mrs. Brock. Well, poor dear ! she's at peace now," said Aunt Maria.

Jane had already heard that the mistress of Callows Farm had succumbed to the shock she had received the night of the fire.

"She was a kind old lady. When was she buried, aunt ?" she asked as she looked out dreamily on to the bright sunshine through the window.

"The day before yesterday, my love," returned Miss Merryweather. "By-the-bye, Mr. Edward was here again this morning, Jane ; he wants to see you, but of course I told him it would be most inadvisable. I told him that you must be kept quite quiet. He looked worried, I could not help noticing, but I told him that you had asked to have his flowers, which he's brought every day, always beside the bed."

"You didn't, aunt," expostulated Jane, blushing furiously ; "how could you ?"

"Bless my life, why not ?" asked Miss McLachlan, who by this time had evidently guessed a part of the little romance which was going on, and brought more than even the usual feminine zest for such things to bear on the occasion. "And why shouldn't you take Mr. Edward Brock's flowers ?" asked Aunt Maria again, who, like other ladies, could argue on any side when thwarted.

"Oh, I don't know," said Jane vaguely, while the bright blushes still played on her cheeks. "I don't think you ought to tell a man that sort of thing."

"Well, all I can say is, I hope you'll be polite to the poor young man when he calls, Jane," said Miss McLachlan. "He has been most thoughtful in coming to ask after you, considering what he's had to do ; with all the terrible trouble he's gone through, I don't know how he can have made the time."

Perhaps Jane Merryweather did not wonder at this so much as her worthy aunt, but she said nothing. Dropping her head back into her cushions she closed her eyes, and luxuriously suffered her thoughts to travel back to the short space of a week ago, when everything had been so different.

How strange everything had been on that terrible night ! For a few days it had seemed like some dream, a thing so improbable as to be difficult to realise. The poor old lady was dead. And the son ? She felt in a way ashamed and humiliated, after all her good resolutions to have succumbed in the manner she had done ;

and yet she knew that those few minutes in which she had been clasped in her lover's arms, were minutes which would probably alter her whole life. Could she retract those words? She must tell him to forget them even if she herself were powerless to do so. That was her duty. She must say that she was frightened—mad—no matter what lie to keep to the implied promise she had given his father in that same small drawing-room in which she was sitting, less than a fortnight since.

That was the dreary vista down which duty beckoned her. And all the long afterwards? It wouldn't bear thinking of.

Her eyes travelled to the window, and then rising she threw it open, leaning her hand against the upright sash. A hazy sunshine was shining on the budding undergrowth, and an almond-tree, ablaze with blossom, blushed against the misty copse of birch and oak. A bird's wing, as it flashed past her, caught the pale golden glow, while again the delicious trembling note of a skylark reached her from some unseen place.

It was the season of hope, but it would seem that this girl, gazing out on to the awakening world, experienced little of that agreeable sensation.

At that moment she was conscious of an opening door, and turning, pale and sad in the glimmer of the afternoon sunshine, she felt her hands seized, and covered with warm passionate kisses. It was her lover.

Now was the moment for the calm, collected word, the explanation.

"My darling, why have you refused to see me? Were you really ill?" and a torrent of endearing phrases poured upon the trembling girl, until in another minute she found herself in his arms.

Half an hour after, Jane Merryweather, drawing herself away, advanced again to the window to look once more upon the placid outer scene.

Nothing was changed. But Nature was harmonious now, for the promise of life, the inner spring-time, was stirring in her heart.

HETTY'S DOWRY.

I.

"You don't think I have been hard upon you, Hetty? You feel sure that if it were not a matter of duty—of conscience, indeed—I should not ask it of you. You

don't suppose your poor old father would willingly give you pain—eh, child?"

The vicar's voice was quivering with emotion, and any passing resentment there may have been in his daughter's heart died out of it as she listened.

"No, no, papa," she murmured, stooping and kissing him; but she could not trust herself to say more, and so hurried from his presence to the sanctuary of her own room, there to fight out the hard battle with self as best she might.

The Rev. George Carmichael had not, on the whole, made a bad thing of his life. Well born and bred, and gifted with unusual abilities, he was not only the incumbent of a pretty and prosperous little parish, but had made himself a name as a popular and successful coach. At one time the ivy-clad, idyllic-looking vicarage had housed as many as half-a-dozen scions of the British aristocracy; but that was in the old days, when Mrs. Carmichael was living, and Hetty, the vicar's one daughter, was away at school.

For the last few years, the number had been limited to four. His own two sons in the army were doubtless somewhat of a drag upon the good man's resources; but it was not the want of money which imparted its present harassed expression to his mild face. He could not bear to see suffering. What must it have been to him, then, to inflict it?

And he had inflicted it just now upon his own "little girl!"

"She has left it behind her," he said, taking up a letter, which was lying open on the table near him, and re-perusing it, for the fifth or sixth time, half-mechanically.

There was one passage in it, at which he paused, with a faint flush on his pale face.

"I am sure," it ran, "from my personal knowledge of you in the dear old days at Frampton, that you will not misunderstand me, but will believe that, had there been the means to justify it on either side, I should not have opposed myself for one moment to an engagement between my son and your daughter; but, in poor Cyril's position, with a title to keep up on a miserable pittance of four hundred pounds a year, you will see for yourself that to consent to his marriage with anyone, unable to add to his income, would be to consign both to misery and poverty. Forgive me for writing—as I feel—strongly."

"It is common-sense," the vicar muttered half aloud; "but she might have

spared herself the trouble. My girl is as precious to me as her boy to her; but I blame myself for not seeing what it was coming to. Now, if it had been Chris, I should not have been surprised. Well, she is a good girl," he added with a sigh. "I can write and put my lady's mind at rest, anyhow. She need have no fear of any daughter of mine forcing herself where she is not wanted."

So he pulled his desk towards him and began a rough draft of a letter, which was to match the Marchioness's own. And in the meantime, upstairs, there was a passionate shedding of tears and a repetition of that fierce struggle between love and pride, of which so many hundreds and thousands of women have tasted the bitterness, ere now.

"I should never have allowed him to speak to me! Oh, why did I—why did I? He knew he had no right—he might have been sure his mother would never consent! And yet, oh, Cyril, Cyril! what shall I do without you?"

That was the burden of it all: what was she to do without him? It had been harder than anybody could tell to say "Good-bye" to him; but, then, everybody had been so sorry to see him go, it had seemed only natural she, too, should care more than usual. He had been such a favourite from the first; nobody else, except Chris Fortescue, had ever made himself so beloved at the vicarage; and then, in manner and appearance, in all that charms the eye, he had such an advantage over Chris. Dear old Chris! whom even Aunt Lavinia—one of those excellent, but aggravating women whose hard manners, from first to last on their way through life, belie their soft hearts—had learned to love, though there had been a time when she was very wrath with what she was pleased to call the romantic folly of her brother and his wife in keeping and christening as their own, a boy who had no claim upon them, and apparently not a friend in the world. It had been all very well, so long as he was not only the most loveable but the most remunerative of the Indian children, with whom the Carmichaels had been thankful, in the early years of their married life, to share their home and eke out their income; but when, with the sudden death of the child's father, the payments ceased altogether, and there was nobody forthcoming to provide for his maintenance either at Alderton or elsewhere, there was

no call, so far as the vicar's sister could see, for the good man to put himself in the breach.

He had done it, however, without hesitation, and he had never regretted it. The boy, like his own sons, was out in the world now, and was doing well, and they saw more of him at home than of either of the others, for, whereas they were quartered now here, now there, Chris, who had aspired to nothing grander than a stool in an office, was always at the great centre. He was in Miss Lavinia's mind at the very moment when Hetty, crying upstairs, was mentally comparing him with her handsome young lover.

"As soon as I know the day," the good lady was saying to herself, as she stamped and sealed a letter addressed to Mrs. Featherstone, The Hollies, West Kensington, "I shall drop him a line and ask him to meet her. Mary can't in common decency refuse to have her, whether the girls think she will be in the way or not, and she need not interfere with their invitations and amusements. Besides, she will want change after this little affair of the heart," and Miss Lavinia made a little satirical grimace, "and I mean her to have it. I can't have her moping about the house like a sick cat, and making poor dear George as melancholy as herself. I know what girls are when they get into that way, and defend me from them!"

Let it be observed and put to her credit, however, that whilst she talked like this, even to herself, she was doing what she honestly believed to be the kindest thing by Hetty, and doing it without loss of time or waste of words.

The little letter that was in progress upstairs, though there was not much of it, took a long time to write, and when it was written, Lady Fenshire herself could have found no fault in it. It was useless his coming to speak to papa, she said—his mother's letter to her father had arrived by the same post as his own to her, and, anyhow, whether it had so happened or not, she would have had to make the same answer. She should never, never forget that he had so loved her as to make him contemplate their marriage; but he would see, when he came to think, that his mother was quite right for both their sakes, and that it could never be. And she hoped he would forgive her for all the trouble she had caused him, and that his life would be a very happy one, and, finally, though she might never see him again, she should

never cease to love him and to pray for him. A pretty, sad little letter, which mirrored the heart of the writer—a heart so heavy that no wonder when Miss Lavinia came up, as the afternoon wore on, with a cup of tea for the “silly child,” she uttered an exclamation of dismay at the sight of her face.

“Good gracious, child! What a fright you have made of yourself! And there is Chris Fortescue just come and dying to see you. His people gave him a holiday, on account of some procession or something of that sort in the City, and he left the show to go on without him, and ran down here. You must bathe your face and make yourself presentable—you must indeed, Hetty.”

The poor little face required a good deal of bathing, however, before it was in any degree fit to be seen, and the pale cheeks and swollen eyes would have told their own tale to the visitor, even had his hostess not prepared him.

As far as Hetty could be glad of anything at that particular juncture, she was glad to have Chris to talk to. He was like a brother to her, with a difference—the difference being that he was ever so many times more patient and sympathetic than either of the boys had ever been.

So she told him all about it out in the garden after dinner, in the calm of the beautiful June evening, with the scent of the roses heavy on the air, and with a sky above them cloudless in its serenity. At such an hour, and with such surroundings, it would have been bliss enough to the simple, ingenuous nature of the young man to feel life, with all its pristine power of enjoyment, stirring within him; but the beauty and the fragrance seemed to die out of the landscape and he as much lost to him as they were to Hetty, as he listened to her.

Had he known anything about it? Had Cyril said anything to him? They had always been such friends, she had thought perhaps he might. It had seemed to her everybody must see months ago, but papa had not, nor yet Aunt Lavinia, and of course it might have been the same with him, only she fancied——

“What did you fancy, Hetty?” he asked quietly. They were pacing slowly side by side down a garden path at the back of the house, just far enough from it, and just sheltered enough by the intervening shrubs, to protect them from remark or observation on the part of the other

members of the household, and nobody saw, any more than Hetty herself, the eager, hungry look that was in his big, brown eyes, as his lips framed the question. “What did you fancy?” he said once more, as she did not reply.

“I don’t know, Chris; it seems conceited to say it, but I thought if anybody would notice any—well, any change in me, it would be you.”

The eager look died out of his eyes, but a faint flush came up into his cheeks as she thus answered him. But her eyes were not for him, and she marked neither.

“And you thought right,” he said. “Besides, Beaumont told me himself he was awfully fond of you. I guessed what it must come to sooner or later.”

“You guessed that it would end like this? Is that what you mean?”

“No, dear, I did not mean that. I felt pretty sure he would put it to the touch—that is what I meant.”

“And you thought it would be all right? You did not remember any more than he did all the difficulties there were in the way of it?” pleaded the girl. She had an uneasy consciousness, truth to tell, that these were things which a man ought to remember, before he speaks. She was longing for the assurance of Chris’s forgetfulness to excuse Cyril’s.

“To tell you the truth, Hetty, I tried not to think of it at all,” Chris said.

“But why? I don’t understand.”

“No, dear, you don’t understand. I did not want to think of you in any other way than I had always been accustomed to think of you. I did not want you converted into a fine lady and living away from everybody—goodness knows where. I liked to think of you here, your old self, always in your old place. It was selfish, I suppose, but I could not help it.”

“You would have had me live here for ever, whether I was happy or not! You never thought of my happiness. Oh, Chris, what has come to you? Instead of wishing me joy, this is what you wished me! And you have got your wish! Oh yes, indeed you have! There is no fear of my ever being a fine lady, and having a home of my own, and distressing you in that way now,” cried the poor child distractedly.

“You don’t understand,” Chris said sadly. “And how was I to tell that you were not happy as you were? I thought we were very happy—all of us; and as for my not wishing you joy, was there ever any-

thing in the world I would not have done for you, Hetty?"

She had turned away from him, and was standing with her head bent, her slight frame shaken with sobs.

"I can't help it," she got forth at last; "I am very foolish, I know, but I am so miserable. I don't know what is to become of me, and I did think when I told you, you would be sorry. If anybody you cared for had been taken away from you for ever, there is nothing I would not have done for you—nothing!"

"But, Hetty, when there is nothing one can do," pleaded poor Chris. "I wish I were a rich man, dear, for your sake."

"If you knew how I hate money!" sobbed out Hetty. "I shall hate it all my life."

"If only I had it at this moment, I would make you love it," he replied gravely.

They heard Miss Lavinia's voice in the distance, calling them in to tea, and crossing the lawn, went into the house in silence; but, once within, the girl made her escape to her own room, and her companion joined the little party in the drawing-room alone.

"Have you told Hetty of your rise in life?" the vicar asked with a smile, as he made room for him. "I only wish promotion were as rapid in the army as it seems to be with some of you in the City."

Chris smiled too as he answered, but in the smile there was no light of triumph or gratification.

"There is a great deal in luck, sir, and I have been very lucky," he said. "Besides, it is time I began to make head against the stream; I have been in the office now hard upon six years."

"You don't mean it, Chris! How the time flies, to be sure!"

"It does not seem like it, certainly," Chris assented, "though it has been pretty close work too. I had not had a fortnight's clear leave out of the year, when I came down here last autumn to be nursed."

"That was a sharp attack you had that time, my boy. A face like a hatchet, hadn't he, Lavinia? and a growth of hair that would have done credit to a chimpanzee. I shall never forget Beaumont's face, when he first set eyes on you. I never fairly comprehended the term 'blank astonishment' before. You had been described to him as such a *rara avis* in every way—he felt, I suspect, something of the disappointment of the country

bumpkin who could not comprehend the Queen without her crown."

"He could not expect a man, fresh risen from a bed of sickness, to turn out as great a dandy as himself," Miss Lavinia observed, not without contempt. "He is a good-looking young fellow, but he is a vast deal too alive to the fact."

"He is a very good fellow," Chris said quietly. "There is the right stuff under the veneer, no matter how thick it is put on."

"Perhaps so," the lady assented shortly; "it is not always the best wood that takes the brightest polish." And then the conversation drifted into wider channels, and became general.

II.

Lord Cyril Beaumont did not feel at all disposed to accept his fate, as it was presented to him in Hetty's letter. How he was to run in the teeth of his mother's wishes he did not quite see, nor yet, when he came, as the girl suggested, to think of it—how he was to keep a wife on three to four hundred a year. But to counter-balance these difficulties there was another—the absolute impossibility of living without Hetty. And here it may be remarked that Hetty Carmichael was just the sort of little girl for whose sake from time immemorial any amount of foolish things have been done by men who ought to have known better. It was not so much that she was pretty, as that she had certain pretty, clinging, affectionate ways, a sweet temper, and the air of loving and believing implicitly, as a child might do, in any one she attached herself to. There is nothing harder to do without, when once one has become habituated to the reception of it, than this simple, spontaneous sort of homage, and young Lord Cyril found his life so spoilt by even the temporary absence of it, that to make up his mind to it for a permanency was out of the question. He would throw up his commission and go out to the Colonies, and see what could be done there, sooner! Give her up he would not, and he wrote and told her so flatly. Whereupon the vicar wrote him a letter, which he, Cyril, characterised as a "stinger," and which took him down on wings of love and indignation to the vicarage, where, however, he failed to find Hetty, and had things put very plainly and decidedly before him by her father.

"I shall never give up the hope of her,

sir. You can't make me, and I shall move heaven and earth to get her," cried the young man.

"She will never have my permission until you have your mother's, and she will never disobey me," was the quiet reply. 'She would not even read your letters, were I to forbid it; but I would beg of you to spare me such a necessity. You tell me yourself you cannot at present see your way. Wait, at all events, until you think you see it, before you say anything more to her.'

This was temporising with the difficulty, and the good man knew it; but it was a great thing to get time. The lad, he said to himself, would learn in a short time, if not to forget Hetty, at least to recognise the fact that a pretty, penniless wife was a luxury in which he could not afford to indulge; and every day that came and went, without him and without word of him, would loosen his hold upon her thoughts and affections.

But Miss Lavinia was not inclined to regard matters so hopefully.

"You had put your foot down once," she observed pithily; "and mark my words, it would have saved a world of trouble if you had kept it there."

Hetty, in the meantime, was on that visit to the Featherstone family which had been arranged for her.

She suffered from no lack of sympathy at The Hollies; indeed, she got rather too much of it. The girls were eager to hear all about it, and evidently thought the subject quite open to discussion. They had been exposed to no such ordeal themselves, and were honestly of opinion, more than one of them, that such excitement would be distinctly preferable to their own normal state of stagnation. To Hetty's mind this way of regarding matters was infinitely preferable to that adopted by the youngest of the sisters, who insisted upon investing the case with a romantic, if not tragical interest, and foredooming the principals in it to an incurable melancholy.

Indeed, so far did she carry this conception, that Hetty, betrayed into a transient blissful forgetfulness of her cruel circumstances, would find the keen eyes of the youthful Laura fixed upon her with such volumes of reproach in them as filled her with remorse and contrition. To reduce her cousin to this state, and then to surfeit her with caresses and condolences, afforded

enjoyment, of the selfishness of which she had no appreciation.

On the whole, Hetty enjoyed her London visit. To her the novelty of town itself, the shops, the Park, the "lions," afforded amusement and variety enough. Chris, too, appeared more than once or twice with tickets for this, that, or the other, of which some lucky chance, not clearly specified, had put him in possession; and so the three weeks passed rapidly. Once, at a grand bazaar, at which her ladyship played the part of stall-holder, Hetty had a glimpse of the arbitress of her fate—Lady Fenshire. The girl had come prepared, having seen the name in the long list of patronesses; but it was to see, not to be seen, and when from amongst the idlers round the stall, at which the Marchioness and her daughters were doing a brisk trade in flowers, a former pupil of the vicar's stepped suddenly forward with an animated recognition of her, Hetty would have been thankful had the earth yawned beneath her. It was not so obliging, however, and the great lady, keen of sight and hearing, after the manner of her kind, caught the name, saw the pretty, blushing face, and took in the situation at a glance. That Hetty had come to look at her she knew as well, in that moment, as Hetty herself, and, great lady though she was, the consciousness of the impression likely to be made by her still striking beauty and grace of manner, upon the little country maid who had attracted her son, was not unpleasurable. She had had her own curiosity too, and was not sorry to find it so easily gratified; so a slender, grey-gloved hand was graciously extended to Hetty, and a few kind words, chiefly of enquiry for the vicar, served somewhat to restore the girl's equanimity. It was the work of a moment—meeting, recognition, and all. Even had there been more to say, that was not the time, nor was that the place; but Hetty carried away with her the vision of a tall, stately woman, with sweet eyes and a smile like Cyril's, which was to rise up in her mind and mock her with a vain hope, only too often in the months to come.

By-and-by—and that, too, was a vision she was to call up again in the future—as they were trying to make their way out—Mary Featherstone, and Chris, and she—they were caught up by the youth who had so innocently betrayed them to the Marchioness, having "in tow," as he would

this young lady a subtle sensation

himself have expressed it a tall fair girl

minus any beauty but that of expression, but possessing that in so marked a degree that her face seemed, as they said to each other afterwards, to photograph itself on their memories.

"It has been at the peril of our lives we have got up with you," the young man declared, laughing; "but Lady Margaret vowed she could not let you go without seeing you to speak to, and as I always volunteer for a service of danger, I offered to bring her."

"I did not know you were at the stall until you had moved away from it," Lady Margaret said for herself, "and I thought I would bring you some roses, en souvenir. You will take them, won't you? I have heard of you so often, and I am so very, very glad to have seen you. They came all the way up from Castle Beaumont—the roses, I mean—and I thought you would like to have them."

There was something in her voice, so soft, and caressing, and sympathetic, that Hetty felt the tears spring into her eyes and check her utterance, as she tried to thank her. Perhaps the other saw and comprehended, for she too was a girl, and was, moreover, in her brother's confidence. At any rate, she barely waited to put the flowers in Hetty's hands, to be gone.

"She is a great deal too pale for black," said Mary Featherstone critically, as she glanced after her, "and she must look quite a dowdy near her mother; but she has a nice smile, certainly."

Hetty made no remark. She was engaged in detaching a rose from the bouquet which had been given her, and this presently she held out to Chris.

"There! I share my souvenir with you, Chris!" she said with a smile. "It won't be the first by a great many we have had in common, and some day, perhaps, I shall remind you of it."

"I shall not want reminding," he replied as he put the flower in his buttonhole, and Miss Featherstone, as she looked and listened, felt more than ever the utter futility of cultivating him on her own account; but with what reflections he would one day look back upon the momentary episode, in which he had himself played only the part of a spectator, one had as much idea as the other.

III.

"Only a year ago!" Hetty Carmichael murmured to herself in a weary, incredulous

voice. "Is it possible it is only a year ago!"

Standing as she had stood a twelve-month since, on just such another day, in her father's study, whilst he made known to her the contents of Lady Fenshire's letter and his own wishes, every particular of their conversation, every word, well-nigh every look, came back to her, and filled her heart with a sense of loneliness which passed expression. It was not only that the curtain had fallen for ever on that particular scene in her life-drama, but that the chief actor in it had played his last upon this mortal stage. The good vicar had been ill for many weeks—dead and buried more than a month, yet it seemed to Hetty as though she had never realised it until now. So much had happened, and all that had happened had been so unforeseen and so sad. Cruel as it sounded when it came from the lips of other people—even from those of Aunt Lavinia herself—there could be no denying the fact that Hugh Carmichael, the elder of the vicar's sons, had gone far to break his father's heart. His credit and his commission had indeed been saved, but saved at the cost of what the good man felt was an injustice to his other children, and the burden of that injustice had been more than he could bear.

It was not so much the thought of the younger brother that weighed upon his mind, boys could shift for themselves, but the girl—what was to become of her? Miss Lavinia had barely enough of her own to keep body and soul together, and from Mrs. Featherstone, with her large family and limited means, nothing was to be expected. There was nobody else to look to, and Hetty was not eligible for a situation of any kind, even could her father have borne the idea of it. She was very pretty and charming—qualifications which the mothers of young families are not apt to desire in their daughters' governesses—and she was not accomplished, nor, indeed, could she be said to be clever in any way.

The subject was one which it did not do to think about. He must work harder himself—take more pupils, and try to put more money by. There was the hope, too, that she might marry—not the young lord, but somebody for whom she should be in every respect better fitted. There had been a time when he had smiled at the thought of Chris Fortescue as a possible suitor for her. The young man

was ungainly and homely, and his little girl had such a flower of a face, but now——

"If only you could make her like you as well as you like her, Chris," he said one day with a groan.

Those words, as the girl felt now, looking back, had sealed her fate, for it was the remembrance of them, as they had been repeated to her at the time, which had enabled her to read aright the last yearning look in the vicar's eyes as he lay dying, and had led her to put her hand, in mute obedience to it, in that of her old playmate.

She could not have told you herself at the present moment whether she was sorry or glad that it had so come about. She was fond of Chris—she could not recall the time when she had not been fond of him, and she was very, very grateful to him. What she should have done without him she did not know; but she had neither heart nor inclination to look beyond the present. And that portion of the past, which it was now more than idle to recall, she honestly strove to forget. There had been no second letter in all the twelve months from the lover who had so impetuously refused to take "No" for an answer, and she had never heard of his flying visit to the vicarage.

"Hetty!" Miss Lavinia called suddenly in her sharp, incisive voice, "if you are in the study, I wish you would look and see when the subscription to the infirmary falls due. Ann Gardner has been here about Maggie, and I don't know whether we can do it or not. Your poor father is sure to have entered the last payment in his diary, and I can't help fancying the year is nearly up."

"I will look at once," the girl called back hurriedly; she did not want her aunt's company at that moment, she was not in the mood for either talking or listening; and she took the book, kept still where the vicar had been accustomed to keep it, in the right-hand drawer of his writing-table, and began to examine the entries for the previous June. She found what she wanted with little difficulty; but having found it, she went on reading on her own account. There was little beyond the bare statement of such small events as had marked the first half of the year which had ended so disastrously; but here and there a brief comment—a note of admiration—a phrase peculiar to the writer—touched her to tears. There was such a passage on the 16th of June—a year ago that very day:

"No one could have behaved better than my little girl! God bless her, and make her duty as plain to her and paramount with her always—to her life's end!"

Poor Hetty! It seemed to her as if the tender, solemn words clothed themselves in the dear familiar voice, and rang clearly in her ears. She pressed her lips to the page, and kissed it passionately.

Three days later, there was written this:

"Hetty went up to town to stay with Mary Featherstone. Showed me a letter from C. B., which I have undertaken to answer. Am afraid there is a very strong feeling on both sides. Wish I had never had him here."

"Poor papa!" she murmured with an involuntary smile, a smile that gave place to an expression of utter bewilderment as she read on, for there, in black and white, in her father's own writing, was the record of that interview between him and her lover, of which no mention had ever been made to her.

"I think," the vicar wrote, "I have made a mistake. I should have declared more positively my conviction of the impossibility of his ever being in a position to comply with the conditions imposed upon him. But there is no reasoning with a lad in love. A year hence, they will both be wiser, and, in the meantime, I have his word of honour that he will abstain from writing to her."

The book dropped from Hetty's hand into her lap, and a mist came over her eyes. Whether the faintness that threatened her would have been more than temporary she never knew, for at that moment a tall figure standing in the opening of the French-window interposed itself between her and the light, and a voice, the subdued tones of which could not disguise a certain ring of triumph, exclaimed eagerly:

"At last, Hetty! I have come to claim you, at last."

It was an hour or two later in the afternoon of the same day, when Chris Fortescue rose to take his leave of the urbane head of a certain well-known and highly respected firm of City solicitors.

"I am afraid," he said, "I have given you needless trouble and plied you with a good many questions, but to a man in my position it is hard to realise——"

"That he has come into a fortune of eighty thousand pounds, which, failing his

existence, would have been swept into the coffers of the State! My dear sir, you will not only learn to realise it yourself, but you will find other people uncommonly apt at helping you to do so. The whole thing lay in a nutshell. There was not a flaw in the title from the first. All we had to do for you, all you had to do for yourself, was to prove your identity."

Chris walked away from the office, like a man in a dream. He had a vague idea that he had committed his affairs and the management of everything belonging to him henceforth for ever, to the smiling, elderly gentleman who had just wished him good-morning, and that everybody who brushed against him in the street must see that something had happened to him; but, with this exception, his mind was in a state of chaos.

As a rule, he was clear-headed enough, but the suddenness with which his good fortune had come to him had fairly dazzled him. Why, it was little more than a week since Cooper chanced upon the advertisement for him, and brought it down to Mark Lane, and he had promised to "treat them all round," if anything should come of it.

Eighty thousand pounds—that was to say, more thousands a year than he had ever, as yet, had hundreds. It was not the mere bare fact of the money he was trying to grasp, but all it meant—all it would enable him to do and get, not for himself—it was not the way with Chris to think of himself—but for Hetty!

He was walking, he did not know whither, or with what precise purpose; but when, after a time, he came out of dreamland, and began to collect his senses, he remembered that it was Saturday, and that he was expected at the vicarage. He hailed the first omnibus he saw going the way of his lodgings—he had not yet so taken in the new state of things as to disport himself in a hansom—crammed the few things he had need of into his bag, and managed, he scarcely knew how, to save his train. How many times, he wondered, had he "done" those sixty miles to and fro, in the course of the last year?

There was nobody whom he knew, excepting always its very limited railway staff, at the little station, and nobody in the village, save the children who, newly let out of school, broke with their shrill voices the otherwise perfect calm of the afternoon. There had been sunshine in town, in the City streets, all the way

down, through the beautiful smiling country; but the young man could not have told you whether the sun shone or not. His mind had been too full—aye, and his heart too; but now, suddenly, the golden glow in which things lay without no less than within him seemed to be borne in upon his consciousness. It was as though the world were transfigured to him. Happy, thrice happy Chris! to whom in so short a space so much had been given—love, wealth, and all the power for good that wealth bears in its bosom!

The vicarage lay, like all else around and about it, in the sunshine; yet, as he came within sight of it, the glad look that had come into his eyes died out of them, and the eager steps slackened their speed.

It was not that there was any sign of mourning about the house, or that in its present quietude there was anything unnatural; it was simply that as his gaze fell upon it, the past, making itself heard in his heart, rebuked the joy of the present.

"We were not sure whether we were to expect you," Miss Lavinia said, standing in the porch to receive him; "and Hetty has a headache, and has gone to lie down. Come in out of the sun, and have something to cool you. It is no good offering you tea, to make matters worse."

"Why, do I look so warm? I don't feel the heat anything out of the way," Chris protested. "And I should like a cup of tea above all things; but what about Hetty? It is nothing more than a headache, is it, Miss Lavinia? I could have sworn she had never had a headache in her life."

"My dear Chris! have you lived to your time of life, without discovering that when a woman is out of sorts, or out of temper—no matter which—she invariably takes refuge in a headache?"

Chris laughed.

"The exception proves the rule," he said, "and Hetty is the exception. Besides, what should put her out? You are not given to quarrelling, you two!"

Miss Lavinia glanced at him sharply.

"She will be down directly, to speak for herself," she replied shortly. "And if you take my advice, you will not take too much notice of any nonsense she may talk. She is out of sorts, as I said just now, and the least thing upsets her. Now, it was most unfortunate to-day. If I could have foreseen what would happen, there should have been no slipping into the house by the back way, I can assure you."

And so, before Hetty put in an appearance at all, so much of the awkwardness she dreaded was spared her, that the fact of the visit which had been paid her in the morning, was made known to her betrothed.

"He had no right to come," Miss Lavinia wound up angrily. "Besides, if he was to come at all, he should have walked up to the hall-door like a man, not slunk round to the study window to take her by surprise, and work upon her feelings before anyone knew he was within miles of her!"

"How could he have got to the front without passing the study, when he had walked from Heatherleigh? You would not have had him make the tour of the village first? He came by the twelve o'clock train, which does not stop at the station here, you know, Chris, and so he came across the fields, and when he saw me—was it not very natural?"

She had come in upon their conversation so suddenly that her aunt was taken by surprise and silenced; but Chris answered quietly, as he kissed her:

"It was quite natural, Hetty. Anybody who had ever lived here would have done the same. But I am sorry he came at all, dear. I think, after all that had happened, he should have stayed away. I don't say but that it may have been a great temptation to come," he added with some compunction, as he mentally put himself in the other's place.

"After all that has happened!" Hetty repeated, ignoring the latter half of the sentence, as though it had not been uttered. "What do you know of all that had happened? Just as much as I did, and no more. I am not going to make any complaints, Aunt Lavinia," she added, glancing round; but her aunt was already disappearing through the doorway, and a little sigh of relief escaped Hetty as she saw it. "It was papa's doing, you know, Chris, and he never did anything in his life but for the best. I should no more think of blaming papa——" she could not finish the sentence, and presently she began again: "It was done for the best, but it was a little hard upon us. It was hard upon him my not knowing, and hard upon me not to know."

"Not to know what, Hetty? You forget you are talking in riddles," Chris interposed.

"Your father made a mistake," he said, when she had explained. "It was just the sort of mistake I can fancy him

making. He was too soft-hearted to refuse hope, even when he had not it to give. And, Hetty, there was no real hope ever. You know that, yourself?"

"One never knows what may happen," she answered with a flush. "Nobody would have supposed a year ago that he could have helped himself in any way in so short a time—and he has. He told papa he would leave no stone unturned, and he has made friends and made interest. He has been promised an appointment which would add to his income, and he means to throw up his commission and take it—that is to say, he did mean to. Now, I don't know what he will do."

She spoke very quietly, with none of the pretty, childish petulance which to some people, Chris amongst the number, constituted one of her charms. She was very pale too, and looked all the paler for the contrast afforded by her black dress, and he could see she had been crying. That none of the ordinary forms of salutation had been gone through between them, he was, for the moment, as forgetful as herself. One is scarcely likely to remember certain conventional phrases, when one finds oneself suddenly stretched upon the rack.

"Was that what he came to say to you?" he asked after a pause. "How was it he waited until your father was dead? Surely he must have known something of it a month ago; surely——"

"He knew nothing of it until within the last week, and he never heard about—what had happened here, until somebody asked him what had been the matter yesterday. He was with his regiment in Ireland, where nobody knew us by name even, and he never saw it in the paper. He was coming to papa; when papa was not here, who was there to come to but me, and how was he to tell that it was no good—that it was too late?"

"He was coming to your father, with his mother's consent? Is that so, Hetty?"

"What does it matter how he was coming?" Hetty cried out in sudden anger. "He has come, and gone! Is not that enough for you?" In another minute, however, the little hand was laid upon his arm, with a pitiful appeal for pardon. "I don't mean to be unkind to you, Chris—I don't indeed—only——"

"Only what, Hetty? It is a very big 'only,' I am afraid," Chris observed with involuntary bitterness. "You may as well tell me the truth," he added, as she remained silent. "He had not his mother's

consent, had he? And he thought, now you were your own mistress, you would take him without it?"

"He thought, if papa consented, Lady Fenshire would not hold out."

"And when he knew there was no question of your father, he saw no harm in persuading you to ignore your father's wishes! Was that the right thing for any gentleman to do? You know it was not," pleaded the young man.

"I know you are very hard upon him. It is not like you to be so hard, Chris, and it is not worth while. You have everything your own way, and you might have some feeling for other people. There might have been a chance, if papa had lived. I might have induced him to let me off my promise—but now," with a sudden little sob, "I never can. If Cyril had come to me to-day, twice as well off, twice as sure of himself and his position as he did come, I should have been bound by it just the same. I——"

"But if I did not choose you to be bound by it, Hetty?" Chris interposed in a strange, tuneless voice.

"You?" the girl replied. "How could you help it? It is not the promise to you, Chris. I was not thinking of that," and her face flushed up—"not at that moment. It was that other promise, that I would never, never let it be said by any one that George Carmichael had taken advantage of his old friendship with Lady Fenshire to palm off his penniless daughter upon her son. I might have guessed from his making me give it that he did not think it was all so entirely at an end; but I thought of nothing then but him!"

"And that was the answer you gave to-day? Did you tell him nothing else, Hetty? Did not you tell him we were engaged?"

There was a dead silence for a moment, as Chris stood looking at her, waiting for her answer. Then she burst into tears.

"I couldn't, Chris," she cried pitifully; "I couldn't."

The young man turned abruptly away from her, and walking to the open window, stood there for some minutes without speaking. He could not have analysed his own feelings any more than he could

have analysed Hetty's, and he could not think. There was only one thing plain to him—it was all over between them. Her heart was not his; and after all, it was not he who had come first, and the other had been true to her. So much he felt even in his anguish. And he—was he to repay all her father's goodness to him by spoiling her life? Was that the purpose to be served by his newly-won wealth?

"Hetty," he said, going back to her, where she still stood quietly crying, "I came down here to-day, with news of my own. A man, who did my father a great injustice, and who afterwards amassed much wealth through the doing of it, died the other day, childless and remorseful, and has left his fortune to me. I had been thinking, dear, ever since I knew of it, how happy it would enable me to make you, in my own way; but I understand now that that can never be—that it must be in your way, and that that is quite different. You told me once that you hated money, and I told you then that were I a rich man, I would make you love it. You may dry your eyes, Hetty. I am a rich man to-day, and I have not forgotten!"

It is nearly five years since the vicar's daughter, taking with her a dowry of twenty thousand pounds, was made welcome at Castle Beaumont. She is seen little in English society, for her husband's duties, in connection with a certain large house of business, already well known in the City as "Fortescue's," keep them much abroad; but, go where she will, her sweet face and sunny temper make friends for her.

As for Chris, he has reaped from the hard work in which he at first sought solace and distraction, golden fruits; but the best gift the years have given him is his wife; and nobody who has heard Lady Margaret Fortescue remind her husband of the withered rose which, gathered by herself on the day of their first meeting, was so long treasured by him for the sake of somebody else, and has watched the look in his eyes as he listened, can doubt that the happiness he once thought he had surrendered for ever, has been granted him at last.

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